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Jesus and the Structures of Power

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Editorial

Jesus' power was in his powerlessness. He stood against the structures of power because they misused and abused their power to exploit and dehumanize people especially the poor and the marginalized. Any abuse of power was a blasphemy for Jesus as those who wielded power were abusing their power and disfiguring the face of God, namely, the human beings. Concerning the religious leaders of his time Jesus said, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; ... They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger" (Mt 23:2-4). For Jesus, humans were more important than laws and the temple. The religious, social and political laws and regulations are to be used for the unfolding and well-being of humans and their world. Therefore, any structures of power that enslave humans and prevent them from exercising their God-given freedom and rights must be denounced, opposed and removed. It is a costly affair. It cost Jesus his life.

At present there is a confusion in the minds of right-thinking people with regard to the people who are elected to exercise political power and have control over institutions that determine the quality of life for the large majority of people. On the one hand, humans want to be free to free themselves without the control of enslaving laws and dehumanizing structures and on the other hand there are people who seek security and stability under the rule of autocrats or tyrannical regimes. Towards the end of the last century and in this century we have witnessed the end of tyrannical governments and dictatorships in a few countries and many thought that the era of dictatorship is over. But surprisingly even in democratic countries, persons who have dictatorial tendencies are elected to the highest offices because they promise political and economic security and stability. May be those who elect them follow

their survival instinct rather than their human vocation to grow and unfold themselves as humans in an atmosphere of freedom and personal responsibility. Abdicating one's responsibility to grow in freedom and in right relationship with God, other humans and the world is a way of escaping from the inner call to be truly human for the sake of dehumanizing security and a false comfort. Jesus stood against all structures of power because they were not letting humans to be really humans and not letting God to be God! The present issue of *Jeevadhara* discusses Jesus' attitude to the structures of power and its consequences for the life of the Church and for each disciple of Jesus.

The first article, "Jesus' Challenge to the Structures of Power" by P. R. John SJ, explains the main theme of this issue of *Jeevadhara*. Jesus proclaims the "Kingdom of God" which liberates people from the tyranny of evil powers. Therefore, Jesus comes into conflict with the structures of power. The way of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem and his confrontation with the structures of power stripped him naked on the cross: 'Ecce Homo', - the naked Christ. And in that *darshan* (religious seeing) of the dead face of Jesus, the Roman centurion proclaimed: "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:37-39). This is the *marga* for all his followers who challenge the structures of power: political, economic and religious. To live and unfold oneself as an authentic human being in the context of India where enslaving religious and social structures of old are re-created and new ones are invented, it is imperative for a disciple of Jesus to follow the *marga* of the Master in order to regain true dignity and freedom.

James George Kurianal, in his article, "The Understanding of Power in the Pauline Epistles" explains that by power Paul often means interior powers that are not manifested externally and is related to the cross of Jesus. The concept of God's power is a leading motif in Pauline theology. It functions in the key passages of Paul's letters and is intrinsically linked to his theology of the cross and its soteriological explication in the message of justification. All are called to become the adopted children of God by submitting themselves only to the power of God of possibilities and not to any power structures of the world.

In the article, "*Diakonia: The Language and Power of Christian Priesthood*", Cherian J. Kottayil emphasizes the need to discover the true meaning of priestly ministry as diakonia or self-emptying service as the language and power of priesthood. The servant-leadership expressed in the washing of the feet of the disciples by Jesus cannot be separated from the institution of the Eucharist and the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments. The celebration of the sacraments cannot be a substitute for self-emptying service to all, especially, to the poor and the marginalized.

In the context of the power structures of the Church, how do women experience their identity and vocation as the disciples of Jesus is the question discussed by Pearl Drego in her article, "Women's Experience of the Exercise of Power in the Church". According to her, the structure of positions and services rendered by clergy have sometimes been used for personal gain, financial misappropriation and even for criminal purposes. There are communities that live in fear and suspicion of their priests and of higher ecclesiastical authorities. The author reminds the readers that there is a growing awareness of women's rights and dignity; awareness that their potential is not fully utilized. She is convinced that the People of God, the real Church, do not need the power that comes from their rulers. They have the power and promise of the Holy Spirit. That power needs to be affirmed and exercised for the welfare of all.

The last article of this issue, "Hominisation and Kingdom of God: Transformational Perspective: Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx" by Rajesh Kavalackal CMI, does not deal directly with the theme of the structures of power but indirectly related to the theme as it deals with the insights of Edward Schillebeeckx on the Kingdom of God ushered in by Jesus that demands from every human being to become authentically human. The Church is at the service of the Kingdom of God. The Church's commitment to the Kingdom of God is to continue the mission of hominisation inaugurated by Jesus.

In the sight of the world, Jesus was powerless. But for "those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24). It is imperative for all the disciples of

Christ and the entire Church to look at Jesus the powerless yet powerful constantly in order to overcome their temptation to misuse and abuse the structures of power in order to secure false power and security. While authority both personal and institutional unites, power and structures of power divide. The first is from the Spirit of Christ and the second is from the spirit of the world. To follow Jesus means to accept his power in powerlessness!

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Jesus' Challenge to the Structures of Power

P. R. John

We live in a world dominated by the demonic powers (unjust structures). In our own country, many self-styled swamijis (some have become politicians) bend a community or even a nation to their will and lead it in an authoritarian way. Often they misuse and abuse religion and spirituality. In the context of many enslaving and dehumanizing structures of power it is imperative for a disciple to follow Jesus' indictment against power, possessions and Satan. The author argues that it is essential to observe that power is closely linked with 'identity' and indeed it gives a false sense of identity. Power is a negative force. It is also demonic to the extent that it tries to possess people when it attempts to accumulate possessions and projections of the self. While the forces of power dehumanize people Jesus proclaims the "Kingdom of God" which liberates people from the tyranny of evil powers. This is the message to all his followers who challenge the structures of power: political, economic and religious.

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Introduction

We live in a world where 'power' and 'authority' are sought after. We live in an age of globalization and digitalization where knowledge is 'power' and means of 'domination'. On the other, across the globe, fundamental forces in religion and capitalist corporates are gaining control over the social and political institutions. A nation like, India is the best example. The State has increasingly assumed the role of arbiter of morals in Western democracies. On issues like abortion, same-sex

marriage and assisted suicide, governments have enacted laws contrary to moral norms that until recently were part of a near-consensus.¹ But any involvement of the state in moral issue raises the question: Are the politicians qualified to do that? In India RSS claims as an arbiter of morals: cow vigilantism, anti-Romeo squads, and declaring rivers Ganga and Yamuna as persons, etc.

Political scientists, social activists and Christian religious leaders agree that 'imperialism' and 'capitalist imperialism' are the root causes of many problems in the world. A world-renowned 'Conflict Management' expert Daniel Shapiro, in his ground-breaking book *Negotiating the Non-negotiable*, succinctly analyses that "power often resides not in who you are but in where you are positioned in a social network or ladder of influence. People often shield themselves from political harm by aligning with powerful individuals in their social networks and ladders of influence".² He enumerates different types of power: *legitimate power, expert power, referent power, reward power, coercive power and informational power*.³ Increasingly, in the 20th and 21st centuries, more than 12,000 followers of Jesus were martyred as witnesses of faith by the structures of *coercive power*⁴ - of Spain and Mexico, of Nazism, of Communism, of Latin America, and finally of Asia, Oceania and the West Asia.⁵ Just a month ago, on Palm Sunday (April 9, 2017) 44 people were killed and more than 126 people injured by the authoritarian and ruthless power hungry ISIS in blasts at two separate Egyptian churches. At the same, one should not forget that the church as an institution also yields lot of power and authority. Jesus of Nazareth was anti-authoritarian and refused all sorts of coercive power ('exestin' and 'exousia').

¹ John Gallagher, "Not in Our Name: State Power can lead to groundless Morality," *America* (November 28, 2016), 16.

² Daniel Shapiro, *Negotiating the Non-negotiable: How to resolve your most emotionally charged conflicts* (New York: Viking, 2016), 126.

³ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁴ They have the ability to threaten, punish, impose sanctions and eliminate.

⁵ <https://zenit.org/articles/the-pope-will-remember-martyrs-of-the-20th-21st-centuries-on-april-22/> accessed on 13.04.2017.

In this article, I shall open with an interesting episode 'Jesus the Prisoner' from the novel *The Master and Margarita* of Mikhail Bulgakov and make a few reflections. Second, I briefly mention Jesus' indictment of power, possessions and Satan. Third, I shall dwell on Jesus and the structures of power. It is essential to observe that power is closely linked with 'identity'. Fourth, I shall spell out the "Kingdom of God" preached by Jesus of Nazareth and his conflict with the structures of power. And conclude with an understanding of the *darshan* and *marga* of Jesus.

Jesus the Prisoner: The Master and Margarita

In the novel, *The Master and Margarita* Mikhail Bulgakov, presented Jesus as epitome of good and the Satan is represented by the dominant forces, with their control of all the social institutions: the police, psychiatric clinics, and the media. The tyranny of the state is reflected in the Russia of Stalin and in the role of Pilate within the Roman Imperial bureaucracy.⁶ Pilate asked Jesus what he said to Judas that could have led to his arrest: "I said, among other things," the prisoner (Jesus) answered,

that every form of authority means coercion over [wo]men, and that a time will come when there shall be neither Caesars, nor any other rulers. [Wo]Man will come into the kingdom of truth and justice, where there will be no need of any authority.

Broken hearted as he hears in these words the "inevitability" of Jesus' execution, Pilate utters the required formula:

There was not, is not, and never shall be any rule in the world greater and more beneficent to [wo]men than the rule of the Emperor Tiberius!

Pilate's broken, sick voice rose and spread around him. The procurator looked at his secretary and the convoy with hatred.⁷ Pilate

⁶ Kathrine Sirluck, "The Master and Margarita and Bulgakov's Antiauthoritarian Jesus," in Paul C. Burns (ed.), *Jesus in Twentieth Century: Literature, Art and Movies*, UBC Studies in Religion: 1 (London: Continuum, 2007), 75f

⁷ Ibid., 83.

cannot bear it, yet he is bound to it. In a rage of cynical misery, he demands of Christ shortly before he sentences him to death:

“So Mark Rat-killer, a cold and confirmed hangman, the people,” the procurator pointed to Yeshua’s [Jesus] mutilated face, “who beat you for your sermons, the outlaws Dismas and Gestas, who with their henchman killed four soldiers, and finally, the filthy informer Yehudah [Judas] - all these are good men?”

“Yes,” answered the prisoner.

“And the kingdom of truth will come?”

“It will come, Hegemon,”

Yeshua [Jesus] answered with conviction.

“It will never come!”

Pilate cried suddenly in such a dreadful voice that Yeshua [Jesus] started back.

Bulgakov concludes from the above trial that Jesus may be expatriated from the totalitarian state, but he will remain in odd corners of the human psyche, quite simply because he is inherent and because human spiritual freedom requires that the possibility of Jesus and his embodiment of the good continue to exist. Jesus sees the goodness in everyone; he sees the real as it is at the level of the ideal. In his person, the ideal becomes real; thus, what is true through him becomes possible for all.⁸

Let me share my own personal experience and the experience of my students who regularly visit the largest prison in South Asia. They come across prisoners who are condemned and tortured by the systems and structures governed by those who are blinded by power and money. “If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why *do you strike me?*” (Jn 18:23) was the answer of Jesus to one of the guards of High priest, who slapped him during the trial at the house of Caiaphas. Often, we hear this very question being repeated in different ways in prisons - “Why am I here when I have done nothing wrong?”

What was so peculiar about Jesus’ trial was that the person who pronounced the judgment against Jesus knew that Jesus was innocent.

⁸ Ibid., 84f.

"I find no case against him..." (Jn 19:4) and he dramatically washed his hand. Two thousand years have passed by but things remain the same for the under-trials who number more than half of the inmates of prisons. The only difference is the modern-day Pilates neither want to wash their hands nor are they ready to give judgments in due time. There are inmates whose cases are under trial for more than seven years. Jesus, who was a great threat to the existing powers of his time, was kept in a prison for a night and was executed without much hearing, but the inmates of prisons are kept in the prison for years. Day after day, many prisoners are taken to courts for hearings but most of them come back without receiving any judgment or sometimes the relatives of the prisoners do not turn up to the courts. Prisoners are not a threat to the existing power; but are considered as non-persons and a source of "*nasta pani*" or side income for many lawyers, judges and police authorities. This year (2017), the Holy Father Francis celebrated the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday at the Paliano Detention Centre, near Rome, where he washed the feet of 12 inmates including a Muslim who is expected to be baptized as a Catholic in June, three women and two inmates serving life terms. The Holy Father went on to say, "At times, certain hypocrisy pushes us to see prisoners only as people who have messed up, for whom the only path is prison. But, we all have the possibility to make mistakes."⁹ Pope Francis was doing this act to challenge the core assumptions about power, authority and leadership.

Jesus' Indictment of Power, Possessions and Satan

Jesus encounters resistance at the launch of his path of mission. This resistance comes from the non-human. In the Gospel, we see demon attempting to gain greater control over Jesus: "I know who you are, the Holy One of God" (Mk 1:24).¹⁰ When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Lk 4:1-13), the three temptations were attempts to get Jesus to give in to the worldly powers. Turning the stones into

⁹ <https://zenit.org/articles/pope-grants-interview-to-italian-la-repubblica-newspaper/> accessed on 13.04.2017.

¹⁰ James A. Crampsey, "Jesus and Power," *The Way* (July, 1986), 181.

bread was the temptation to win the world through the use of economic power. Leaping from the highest pinnacle of the temple was the temptation to gain religious power. And finally, Satan offered Jesus political power by offering him dominion over all the kingdoms of the world. Needless to say, to each of these temptations, Jesus said, "No!" he chose a different path "emptying" – "took the form of a slave" (Phil 2:5-11). Jesus emerges victorious and superior to Satan and all structures of power. He resists and refuses power and radiates an inner power that transforms the thoughts of people.

Jesus: The Structures of Power

It is more difficult to deal with this topic. Power is a negative force. Power is demonic to the extent that it tries to possess people when it attempts to accumulate possessions and projections of the self. In *Anti-Christ*, F. Nietzsche declared that the primary drive governing human behaviour is "the will to power."¹¹ The biblical story of Adam is rebellion against God was his will to power. Power then can be seen to be active at the level of identity. Power tries to annihilate a person's and community's identity by taking over the person or the community in the last resort killing the person and annihilating the community. Power is attractive and people have a drive towards it: its attractiveness is often embodied in possessions which themselves function as a cipher for personal identity. Individual and social identities are socially constructed.

Jesus lived in the socio-politico-economic environment in which the identity of the Jewish people in and around Galilee was affected by Hellenistic culture. Richard A. Horsley says, "the standard discourse of New Testament studies tends to avoid consideration of politics, whether the politics of the historical situation in early Roman Palestine or the ways in which Jesus may have been affected by or involved in those politics."¹² It is extremely difficult to draw separate lines between

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols: The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 144.

¹² Richard A. Horsley, "Jesus and the Politics of Palestine under Roman Rule," in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus Research: New Methodologies and Perceptions* (Cambridge, U.K: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 335.

religion and politics and economics. The Roman occupation, religion, politics and geography contributed to a division of Palestine into *Judea* (politically administered by Roman procurators, yet the religious center of Judaism), *Samaria* (also politically administered by the Roman procurator, yet religiously distinct from Judaism), and *Galilee* (under the administration of Herod Antipas, geographically separated from Judea, but religiously identified with Judaism).¹³

Marcus Borg viewed that, "Social world is context... within which the Jesus tradition received its meaning."¹⁴ During the time of Jesus, Galilee was ruled by strongman Herod Antipas (4 BCE-39 CE), one of the sons of Great Herod. He used the Temple and high priesthood as instruments of his rule. Judea was administered by the governor, Pontius Pilate (26 CE-36 CE). The ultimate authority was in the hands of the governor, and internal Jewish affairs were managed by the high priest.¹⁵ The high priest was directly appointed by the governor and was chosen from a small number of priestly families, which constituted the nucleus of the governing aristocracy (council) in Israel. The most important was the council at Jerusalem called the Sanhedrin. The priests conducted sacrifices and other offerings to God on the altar and presided at festival rituals. But the Temple and high priesthood were also political because the high priests ruled over the Judean society and controlled economy.¹⁶ The bigger portion of the land was controlled by the elite priestly groups through "heavy demands

¹³See Oxford *Bible Atlas*, ed. Herbert May and G. H. Hunt, second edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1974). James D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making Vol I Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003).

¹⁴ Marcus Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge: PA: Trinity International Press, 1994), 97.

¹⁵ Johnny Awwad, "The Kingdom of God and the State: Jesus' Attitude to the Power and Governing Structures of His Day," *Theological Review* XXII/1 (2001), 39.

¹⁶ Richard A. Horsley, "Jesus and the Politics of Palestine under Roman Rule," in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus Research: New Methodologies and Perceptions* (Cambridge, U.K: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 340.

for taxes, rent and debt repayments,” often times backed up by judicial authority.¹⁷ The parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mk 12:1ff) and the parable of imprisonment for debt (Mt 5:25f; 18:23ff) were the telling examples of social hierarchy of Jesus’ times.

In such complex relations of power, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee. The region of Galilee was considered as the land of Gentiles—of the people who lived in darkness (Mt 4:13f). S. Freyne was of the opinion that Galilee was structurally different from Judea and there were increasing tensions in Galilee, at times especially in the economic sphere.¹⁸ Many groups were threatened of their identity and often were judged by the authoritarian power ‘centre’: ‘No Prophet comes from Galilee’ (Jn 7:52). Jesus carried the Galilean ‘untouchability’. Palestine during the time of Jesus was an agrarian society, and the majority of the population was from the peasantry. Like his father, Jesus was a carpenter and possibly making ploughs and yokes for the agrarian community. Jesus was a “marginal Jew” from Galilee and his times were marked by three great structures: the Jerusalem Temple, the land of Israel and the Law of Moses. There were several ways of being a Jew: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots. Besides them there were also scribes, chief priests, tax collectors and sinners.¹⁹ The authority of the males over females had been very strong. Women were discriminated against and were given a secondary place.

Jesus challenged the structures of power. He was not ambitious to misuse or abuse the right to do something or the right over something. He exercised power and authority with inner freedom and joy, reaching out to strangers, feasting with prostitutes, afraid of nobody. In the New Testament, we read: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18; Jn 10:18; 17:2). Jesus was able to forgive sins, expel the demons (Mk 2:10; 3:15), and heal the sick.

¹⁷ Johnny Awwad, “The Kingdom of God and the State: Jesus’ Attitude to the Power and Governing Structures of His Day,” *Theological Review* XXII/1 (2001), 40.

¹⁸ As Quoted in Gerd Theissen and Anne Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 175.

¹⁹ Daniel J. Harrington, *Jesus: A Historical Portrait* (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2009), 20.

In the confrontation of paying taxes, Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Mk 12:17). This key verse has to be understood in its context. Some Pharisees and Herod's men were sent by the teachers of the law and the chief priests to trap Jesus and to hand him over to the Roman Governor. What belongs to God, then? Samuel Rayan holds: The people, the land, its gold and its silver, its yield of grain and wine and oil, its wool and its flax, and the honour of all people including the smallest child. It is all this that must be restored to God and to his poor.²⁰

In the context of lamenting over Jerusalem, some Pharisees had advised Jesus to get away from Jerusalem and he said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today, tomorrow and the next day, and on the third day I finish my work" (Lk 13:32). At the feast of Passover, Jesus made a strong *dharna* (protest) in the temple and drove the money changers seated at the tables: "You have made it a den of robbers" (Mk 11:17b). W. Pilgrim argues that Jesus is pointing to systematic corruption prevalent in Temple service:

Historically, we know that in the time of Jesus, there was a massive system of exploitation by those possessing civil and religious control of the temple. The high priestly and related families dominated the temple both religiously and economically. From it they amassed exorbitant wealth, which became basis for their power and influence...²¹

The act of purification of the Temple is not only a spiritual act but an act which defied the prevailing economic, political and religio-cultural authority of the day. Jesus had disputes with the Pharisees on observance of Law, especially on Sabbath and ritual purity. Jesus was

²⁰ Samuel Rayan, "Caesar versus God," *Selected Writings of Samuel Rayan: The Relevance of his passion and message of our times* (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2011), 154.

²¹ As Quoted in Johnny Awwad, "The Kingdom of God and the State: Jesus' Attitude to the Power and Governing Structures of His Day," *Theological Review* XXII/1 (2001), 58.

echoing the movement began by John the Baptist. The followers of Jesus expected that he would overthrow the existing relations of wealth and power, to be the herald of social and political revolution: 'But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel' (Lk 24:21). At the same, Jesus' message of 'kingdom of God' transcends the narrow interests of the various structures of power living in Palestine. The kingdom of God envisaged by Jesus is that of equality, human dignity, justice, love, peace and sharing.

Jesus: Kingdom of God

We read in Mark "the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe" (1:14-15). The expression "Kingdom of God" corresponds to the Hebrew *malekuth*, the Aramaic *malekutha* and the Greek *basileia*. The Kingdom of God meant not a territory but rather a situation, a state and quality of being in which God exercised his kingly reign. In fact, the concept of the Kingdom is more a deep symbol, which N. Perrin calls a "tensive symbol."²² It symbolizes God's saving activity. Jesus consciously made this central symbol of his message. For Jesus, the Kingdom was existential and eschatological at the same time.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. (Lk. 4:16-20)

Jesus was evoking the great biblical story of liberation. Jesus announces that the kingdom of God is in your midst (Lk 17:21). Jesus chooses Capernaum as the "social locus" of proclaiming the "Kingdom

²² N. Perrin, *Jesus and the language of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 33.

of God" in word and deed. Capernaum lies on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee (Lk 7:1ff; Lk 10:13-15; Mt 4:12f; Mt 9:1). Jesus breaks with his family to join the family of God, made up of all those who do the will of God, which is to love (Mk 3:31-35). He abandons himself wholly to God's providence (Mt 6:28-43), depending for his livelihood on the casual help provided by sympathizing friends (Lk 8:1-2). He associates with outcasts, becoming an untouchable with the untouchables. He touches a leper to welcome him back to human fellowship (Mk 1:40-42). He dines with the ritually unclean and socially ostracized tax collectors and sinners, incurring the hostility of the religious elite: "this man receives sinners" they say, "And eats with them" (Lk 15:2; Mk 2:16). The solidarity of Jesus with these victims of economic, social and political oppression is not merely a passive solidarity that assumes and endures their lot. It also leads to a confrontation with the religious and political establishment, which oppresses them and to a struggle with Satan (structured evil) and Mammon (the mental cause of capitalism), which are in his worldview the ultimate sources of oppression.²³ Like the prophets of the Old Testament, Jesus gave hope. "But many that are first will be last, and the last first" (Mk 10:31). Sebastian Kappen recognizes the divinity of the man Jesus and challenges us to discover the divinity for the sake of greater commitment to Jesus in praxis.

If ever there was a man taken hold of by the Divine and empowered to transform things animate and inanimate, that was Jesus. In his presence the chaotic reverted to form, death ebbed away to make room for the influx of life. At his command the tempest subsided, the raging sea resumed its calm... His glance pierced the inmost recesses of the human spirit, diffusing light and love. Power went out of him to heal not only individuals but also a sick society and a decaying religion... He did find an outer limit to his power in the resistance of the unbelieving enemy.²⁴

²³ Cf. George Soares-prabhu, "Class in the Bible: The Biblical Poor, a Social class?" *VJTR* 49, (1985), 320.

²⁴ S. Kappen, "Power in Powerlessness," S. Painadath, ed., II, xvii.

Jesus encountered the God who is to come and lived from the future. He was gripped by the vision of the human-divine community of the end-time. He understood the realization of that goal and called it the reign of God.²⁵ For Jesus, “the Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Mt 13:44-45). “The last became the first, and the first last” (Mt 19:30), a new way of evaluating things, persons, events, customs and actions shaped Jesus’ social praxis.²⁶ He went further and taught that the blessings of the new belong only to the poor.²⁷ He said, “whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be the slave of all” (Mk 9:35). Jesus not only rejects the division of society into the great and the least but also repudiates the very standard by which the worth of a person was determined.²⁸ Jesus rejected the wisdom of the wise. Instead, he affirmed the common human way of knowing God through love. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8). Jesus called for an attitude of universal compassion and empathy.²⁹

Jesus’ teaching was against the psalms of vengeance. His non-violent struggle was for justice. He understood the violent characteristics of an unjust system that had reduced persons to misery and prostitution. He launched a renewal movement and a movement of God’s presence. He was the power of attraction and acted with surprising authority. In his manifesto of reign of God, Jesus did not propose a doctrine of God. God was not a theory but an experience which transformed him. The difference was that the religious leaders identified God with their

²⁵Sebastian Kappen, “The Dialectic of Culture and Prophecy,” in *Selected Writings of Sebastian Kappen, Jesus and Culture Vol I*, ed. Sebastian Painadath (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 11.

²⁶Ibid., 13.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., 14.

²⁹Ibid., 15.

religious system and not with the happiness and the life of the people. Jesus was rooted in the faith of the people. A decisive experience was withdrawing to pray through all his intense activity as an itinerant prophet, he always nurtured his communication with God in silence and solitude. His final experience of God impelled Jesus to unmask the machinery of a religion that was not at the service of life. A religion that worked against life was a false religion. Impelled by God of life, Jesus came to those whom religion had forgotten. The father cannot be monopolized by pious elite or by a priestly class controlling the religion. God did not give anyone special status over others, he did not give anyone, religious power over the people, but rather the power and authority to do good.³⁰

Jesus confronts the theological establishment (the scribes) in order to free people from a burdensome interpretation of the ritual and moral law (Mk 2:1-3:6). He challenges the religious establishment (the chief priests) and their misuse of the temple, to protest against the exploitation of the people in the name of religion (Mk 11:15-19). He defies the political establishment (Herod) whose threat to kill him (a clear sign of the political impact of his ministry) he dismisses with contempt (Lk 3:31-33). The life of Jesus is riddled with conflict.³¹

We can find a special consciousness of authority on the part of Jesus both in the antithesis which sets Jesus "I" against the Law of Moses and also in his statements about why he has come, which express the aim of his mission. Jesus speaks neither in the name of Law nor in the name of God, but emphatically in his own name. In so doing, he appears as an independent "lawgiver."³² That God is "father" is part of the collective imagery of Judaism (Hos 11:1; Jer 31:20). But Jesus differentiates in a striking way between 'my Father' and "your Father,"

Jose A. Pagola, *Jesus: An Historical Affirmation* (Bangalore: TPI, 2013), 352-384.

Cf. George Soares-prabhu, "The Jesus of Faith: A Christological Contribution to an Ecumenical Third World Spirituality," F. X. D' Sa, ed., 4, 290.

Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 523-24.

not only in Matthew, where this terminology is immediately striking, but also in Luke, where “my Father” (Lk 10:22; 22:29; 24:49) stands alongside “your Father” (6:36; 12:30, 32). Even John makes the risen Christ say: “I go to my Father and your Father” (Jn 20:17) nowhere does Jesus associate himself with his disciples in order to address God as “our Father”. Jesus teaches to call God, Father, in the prayer Our Father that has been formulated for the disciples and from their perspective. The distinction between “my Father” and “your Father” in the post-Easter Christology indicate a special relationship of Jesus to God.³³ For us what is important is that the addressing of God as *Abba* (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). The term can imply charismatic intimacy.³⁴ We find the statement that healings stem from the faith of those who seek help (Mk 5:34; 10:52; Lk 17:19; Mt 9:29; 15:28). It is contained implicitly in John the Baptist’s question (Mt 11:2ff). Jesus replies to the question whether he is the one who is to come by pointing to the miracles which are taking place in the present, but without emphasizing that they are done by him.³⁵

Therefore, one can conclude that there is an indication of Jesus’ attitude to the tradition of John the Baptist. John was a prophet, but more than a prophet (Mt 11:9), the greatest of those so far born of human beings (Mt 11:11), with whom a new age had dawned. For since the days of the Baptist, men of violence (Mt 11:12) had stormed the Kingdom of God. If John stood on the threshold of the Kingdom of God, surpassing all the prophets, how much more must Jesus be, who had already crossed this threshold.³⁶ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God and saying, the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news (Mk 1:14-15).

Jesus accepted the possibility of death out of faithfulness to his mission. Knowing the risks, he took his ministry to Jerusalem. He was executed. His tragic end did not come as a surprise. It had been developing day by

³³ Ibid., 526.

³⁴ Ibid., 527.

³⁵ Ibid., 528.

³⁶ Ibid., 530.

day, in his conflict with the pharisaic sectors and opposition to the religious authorities. His death was the ultimate, supreme sacrifice to God's plan, his supreme contribution to salvation to all.

The Last Supper was the clash of two sorts of power: political and religious. These meals, like Jesus' parables and healings, signified the nearness of the kingdom of God. Celebrating such a meal in the face of impending death, Jesus apparently did not think that his coming death called his previous activity into question. "Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mk 14:25). Jesus goes into the darkness of death trusting that God will somehow use his dying as God had used Jesus' living to communicate the nearness of the kingdom. George Soares-Prabhu considers that the cross is the natural outcome of a life of solidarity with the poor and the outcastes and of confrontation with the powerful that oppress them. Conflict with the rich and the powerful leads inevitably to a fatal confrontation: death. This death becomes an appropriate fulfilment of a life with and for the poor and the outcastes. For on the Cross, Jesus is wholly poor and outcaste.³⁷

Concluding Reflections

Jesus says 'no' to domination and structures of domination and calls his brothers and sisters as friends. The rule of God does not imply the rule of humans.³⁸ Jesus was aware that power corrupts human beings and corrupts them absolutely. In recent times, Pope Francis often exhorted us to become aware of idols [structures of power] deeply hidden in us: ambition, careerism, a taste for success, the tendency to dominate others.³⁹ The post-Easter story of a request of James and John, the sons of Zebedee should not be interpreted away as a mere advise to use power as a means to service or service as a means to power but to radically and unconditionally renounce all exercise of

³⁷ Cf. George Soares-prabhu, "The Jesus of Faith: A Christological Contribution to an Ecumenical Third World Spirituality," F. X. D' Sa, ed., 4, 290.

³⁸ Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith*, trans. John P. Galvin (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 115.

³⁹ "Homily of Pope Francis," April 14, 2013, Vatican.va.

power. In such exercise, there are no masters but all of us are slaves (servants) to one another:⁴⁰

The way of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem and his confrontation with structures of power stripped him naked on the cross: 'Ecce Homo', - the naked Christ. And in that *darshan* (religious seeing) of dead face the Roman centurion proclaimed: "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:37-39). This is the *marga* to all his followers who challenge the structures of power: political, economic and religious. The reward is the sight of Jesus' dead face. In that very dead face, we are called into the *anubhava* (experience) of resurrection and to be witness to the Son of God. Even though the resurrection escapes the net of history, yet it is accessible to us in our present experience of the living Jesus, which assures us that Jesus is alive. It cannot be argued about but must be lived. One follows Jesus along this way because one has experienced the absolute mystery in him and has realized that his way is indeed the way of life. Everyone is invited to walk along and share.⁴¹ In the very renunciation of power, we receive the true (*apostolic*) authority (paradox) of the Crucified Jesus: "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ is Lord, with ourselves as your servants (*diakonia*) for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor 4:5). To conclude, all structures of power in the world have to be continuously transformed and relativized by the spirit of Jesus. Jesus was an incorrigible optimist who believed that men and women will come into the kingdom of truth and justice, where domination of power has no place.

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⁴⁰ Sebastian Kappen, "The Abolition of Power," in *Selected Writings of Sebastian Kappen, Jesus and Culture Vol II*, ed. Sebastian Painadath (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 60.

⁴¹ Cf. George Soares-prabhu, "The Jesus of Faith: A Christological Contribution to an Ecumenical Third World Spirituality," F. X. D' Sa, ed., 4, 292.

The Understanding of Power in the Pauline Epistles

James George Kurianal

The power holders often act with their self-interests and pay little attention to the views and needs of others. In the long run then, power may have a destructive effect on the power holder. However in the Pauline understanding power often means interior powers that are not manifested externally and is related to the cross of Jesus. The concept of God's power is a leading motif in Pauline theology. It functions in key passages of Paul's letters and is intrinsically linked to his theology of the cross and its soteriological explication in the message of justification. Because this concept is so closely related to the message of the cross, Paul often speaks of 'power' in a paradoxical context. Although 'power' is generally assumed to be an important motif in Pauline theology, the concept has not yet been fully explored.

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Introduction

In the common parlance, we understand *power* as some kind of force which is imposed on humans or human institutions. Often this imposition of exterior power results in some changes in the receiving end. Paul repeatedly refers to *power* which often means interior powers that are not manifested externally. Paul often talks of power but in a way quite different from its understanding in the modern society. The

power which Paul refers to not imposed on others by force but is accepted by others because it has an interior logic. This is the power Paul writes of. And he is quite blunt about it: for Paul, power is closely linked with the cross.

A true understanding of the concept of power which Paul refers to can be understood only in relation to the cross of Christ. So it is closely linked to the power of cross. It can never be an arbitrary manipulative exercise of force which takes little or no account of the reality on the ground. True power does not impose itself but receives or perhaps absorbs reality. This is evident from one Pauline passage where refers to power.

“May He, through his Spirit, enable you to grow firm in power with regard to your inner self, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then planted in love and built on love, with all God’s holy people you will have the strength to grasp the breadth and length, the height and depth, so that knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond knowledge, you may be filled with the utter fullness of God. Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.” (Ephesians 3:16ff).

C.J.Torelli and S.Shavitt define power as “an individual’s relative capacity to modify others’ states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments.”¹ The unrestricted and absolute ability of power holders to act without any interference often results in a self-centered conceptualization of power for promoting one’s own ideas and goals.² Accordingly, the power holders often act with their self-interests and pay little attention to the views and needs of others³. In

¹ C. J. Torelli and S. Shavitt, “Culture and Concepts of Power” in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* © 2010 American Psychological Association 2010, Vol. 99, No. 4, 703–723, here P. 704 (see also D. Keltner, D. Gruenfeld, and C.P.Anderson, “Power, Approach, and Inhibition,” *Psychological Review* 110 (2003):265-284 here 265).

² A. D Galinsky,, D. H. Gruenfeld and J. C. Magee,, “From Power to Action” in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85 (3), 453-466

³ S. T. Fiske, “Controlling other people: The impact of power on stereotyping”. *American Psychologist*, 48 (6) (1993), 621-628.

the long run then, power may have a destructive effect on the power holder.⁴

As Torelli and Shavitt observes, "recent research has suggested that powerholders can also behave in a more benevolent or attentive way, showing concern about others' interests or attending to them as individuals ... For instance, Chen et al. found that when power was primed, people with communal and exchange relationship orientations ... behave differently."⁵

Exchange-oriented people, or those disposed to give a benefit to a partner with the expectation of receiving comparable benefits in return, behaved according to common expectations about powerholders; that is, they benefited themselves over others. In contrast, communal-oriented people, or those disposed to respond to the needs and interests of others, behaved in ways aimed at benefiting others over themselves. Similarly, Howard *et al.* showed that powerful individuals with either a chronic or a temporarily salient independent (interdependent) self-construal can be less (more) generous in resolving their disputes with low-powered opponents.⁶

The New Testament Understanding of Power

The power exercised and preached by Jesus is entirely different from the worldly understanding of power. Thus we read in Mk 10, 42-45:

So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

⁴ D. Kipnis, *The powerholders*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press (1976).

⁵ C. J. Torelli and S. Shavitt, "Culture and Concepts of Power", 705.

⁶ E. S. Howard, W.L.Gardner, and L.Thompson,. The role of the self-concept and the social context in determining the behavior of power holders: Self-construal in intergroup versus dyadic dispute resolution negotiations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 93(4) (2007), 614-631

Pauline epistles elaborate the NT understanding of power, which inverts the logic of worldly dominion and empire by liberating and redeeming the “least of creatures” (elachistos). “I came among you in weakness,” as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:4, “in fear and great trembling, and what I spoke and proclaimed was not meant to convince by philosophical argument but to demonstrate the convincing power of the Spirit [*pneumates dunameos*], so that your faith should depend not on human wisdom but on the power of God [*dunamistheou*].”

The Concept of Power in Corpus Paulinum

The concept of God’s power is a leading motif in Pauline theology. It functions in key passages of Paul’s letters and is intrinsically linked to his theology of the cross and its soteriological explication in the message of justification. Because this concept is so closely related to the message of the cross, Paul often speaks of ‘power’ in a paradoxical context. Although ‘power’ is generally assumed to be an important motif in Pauline theology, the concept has not yet been fully explored.⁷

In reference to concept of power of God, Paul uses the Greek word *dunamis*. In the Pauline corpus, the Greek word *kratos* (denoting the possession of force or strength that affords supremacy or control) appears only three times (Eph 1,19; 6,10; Col 1,11. Of these three occurrences of *kratos* twice it is used synonymously with *dunamis*, while in Eph 6,10 *dunamis* is linked with the verb *endunamow* (of spiritual and moral strengthening enable, empower, make strong). *Ischus* (strength, power, might) occurs three times in the Pauline corpus: in Eph 1,19 synonymously with *kratos* and *dunamis* and in Eph 6,10 and 2 Thesse 1,19.

Not few studies were made on the Pauline concept of *power/dunamis*.⁸ Paul often refers to power in a paradoxical context. Pauline understanding of power is inseparably linked with the the theology of

⁷ P. J. Graebe, *The Power of God in Paul’s Letters* (WUNT 2/123), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, p.2

⁸ For bibliographical reference for the most important works in this regard see Graebe, *The Power of God in Paul’s Letters*, p.3.

the cross.⁹ In the later books of Septuagint power of God (*dunamis-theou*) is a set phrase. As Graebr notes 'for the Israelites the *dunamis* of God is not notion discovered through theoretical reflection, but a historical reality'¹⁰ (r 19). In the Pauline corpus *dunamis* is closely linked with the Glory (doxa) and wisdom (sofia) of God.. This has its precedence in the Septuagint(see for example Job 11,20; 12,13; Ps 20[21],2).¹¹

For a better understanding of the Pauline concept of *dunamis* (Power) we shall have a closer look at two passages in the Roman correspondence where the word occurs.

Romans 1,3-4

In the prescript of the Roman correspondence, we read: "1:3 the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 1:4 and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ..." in this passage, Paul stresses that through the resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ has become the Son of God "in power". Most commentators agree that in power (*en dunamei*) must be understood as qualifying the phrase "Son of God"¹². Rom 1,3-4 does not mean that Jesus became 'Son of God' but that 'through the resurrection from the dead' he becomes "the Son of God in power." (see also Schlier 1979, 25). Here the Greek expression *en dunamei* (in power) refers to the power of Jesus Christ, the power with which the Son of God of has been endowed through his resurrection. This power is the power to save all those who believe in him. That means the power is manifested soteriologically.

Romans 1,16-17

Another import passage in the Epistle to Romans uses the word *dunamis*. This is Rom 1,16-17:

⁹ For a detailed discussion on the theme see U. Heckel, *Kraft in Schwachheit. Untersuchungen zu 2. Kor 10-13* [WUNT II/56], Tübingen 1993.

¹⁰ P. J. Graebe, *The Power of God in Paul's Letters*, 19.

¹¹ For more on this see P. J. Graebe, *The Power of God in Paul's Letters*, 21.

¹² Cranfield 1975, 62; for further literature see, Schlier, 1979, 24, note 28.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."

Here it is evident that the gospel is the power of God. In this periscope 'gospel' is the key motif. These two verses serve as the launching-pad and provide the primary thrust and direction for the rest of the letter, with the double explanation concerning the gospel ("for ... for ...") giving both the *raison d'être* for Paul's missionary endeavor and the outline of the main argument to be developed through chaps. 1-15.

"For it is the power of God," is a regular concept in Paul (particularly in Rom 1:20; 9:17; 1 Cor 1:18, 24; 2:5; 6:14; 2 Cor 4:7; 6:7; 13:4). By it he clearly has in mind a force that operates with marked effect on people, transforming them - as evident particularly in conversion (1 Cor 2:4-5; 1 Thess 1:5) and resurrection (1:4; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:43; 2 Cor 13:4; Phil 3:10) - and providing a source of energy to sustain that qualitatively different life (1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 4:7; 6:7; 12:9; 13:4; Col 1:11, 29; 2 Thess 1:11; see also on 15:13).

In this passage the power of God is further defined as "for salvation" (*eissoterian*), which means "with the effect of bringing about salvation." The word salvation (*soteria*) would be familiar to Paul's readers in the everyday sense of "bodily health, preservation, safety" (*LSJ, MM*); cf. e.g., Mark 5:23, 28, 34; 6:56; 10:52; Acts 27:34. In the religious meaning, which was of course known in Greek thought, but which dominates the LXX (34 times in the Psalms, 18 in Isaiah) and NT usage (*BGD*), the physical imagery is retained in its sense of deliverance from peril and restoration to wholeness.

It is God's righteousness, which enables and in fact achieves man's righteousness; the "righteousness of God" being his way of explicating "the power of God for salvation".

Rom 1,17 must be taken into account in understanding the meaning of *dunamis* in v.16. Rom 1,17 gives the reason why the gospel is the power of god for the salvation of everyone who believes. In the gospel

God's righteousness has been revealed. The righteousness of God is a leading soteriological motif in the Pauline theology. The righteousness of God is intimately related with sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross (see Rom 3,24-26).

The righteousness of God should not be understood in a forensic way. Louw and Nida discuss the meaning of *dikaiosune* (righteousness) within the semantic subdomain "Establish or Confirm a Relation". Thus they translate Rom 1,17: "... how God puts people right with himself is revealed in it as a matter of faith from beginning to end"¹³. As Graeber observes "the new reality of those who have been justified is not a mere formal and static condition. It is essentially a relational reality."¹⁴ The power of God is for the salvation of everyone. God's act of salvation is an act of justification which is attained through the sacrificial death of Christ. Here the salvation attained through faith in Jesus in contrast to the works prescribed in the Mosaic Law. Rom 3:25-26 must be understood in the historical context; Paul wanted emphasis that in order to be justified one need not undergo circumcision and other observances of the mosaic law. This is clarified in Rom 3,28: "For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law." Here law Paul mentions is the Mosaic Law.

Paul's writings on divine *dunamis* draw from the biblical message that what is impossible for us is possible for God. In various letters to the Corinthians and Romans, Paul invokes the salvific character of making it possible by the Spirit (*dunamispneumatos*). The radical nature of this message lies in reversing the worldly understanding of power in favour of a soteriological *dunamis* which is archived paradoxically through the death of Jesus which may appear as weakness but in fact not. This reversal is expressed in Paul's startling claim in 2 Corinthians 13,4: "For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God."

¹³J.P. LOUW - E.A. NIDA, *et al.*, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*. 2 vols. (New York, United Bible Societies 1988), s.v.

¹⁴P. J. Graeber, *The Power of God in Paul's Letters*, 181.

Conclusion

In the life of Paul we can see how the paradox of power and weakness worked. As Grundman observes "The operation of the power of God stands under a particular law according to the NT understanding. The place of operation is human and earthly existence which the flesh stamps as weak and corruptible. This is what gives rise to the concealment of power of God. The gospel comes under the law, of which it may be said 'God's weakness is stronger than human strength.' (1 Cor 1,25)"¹⁵

As Grundmann suggests, 'The power of God is not an empty word. It is grounded in the divine act of deliverance in the Christ event which over comes the rule of Satan and which works itself out in the continued deliverance accomplished by the preaching of the gospel.'¹⁶ In the message of Christ we have the power of God, which is the power of salvation. Paul construes this *dunamis* accordingly as a divine call to become children of God. The believers are now invited to become adopted children of the *deusadventurus* - the God of the Possible. This is because God makes the salvation otherwise impossible, possible through his power.

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¹⁵ Grundmann "Dunamis, etc", in G Kittel (ed.), *TDNT*, Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1964, vol 3, 284-317, here 316

¹⁶ Grundmann, "Dunamis", 309

***Diakonia*: The Language and Power of Christian Priesthood**

Cherian J. Kottayil

Priesthood is for the people, invoking divine presence and life to the people by rendering kenotic service (*diakonia*). Instead of alienating oneself from day today needs and problems of human life, priest should serve the people in their personal and communitarian needs. As Christ is the exact representation of God's being (Heb 1:3), the priest must be the living image of Christ in the world. He should be the true face of God who is living with people. Motivational crisis is the most tragic problem which we encounter today in priestly life. Motivational transparency is to be achieved through the formation of both academic and spiritual realms. If one fails to understand this motivational precision the priestly life would be in a state of meaningless ambiguity. This leads to pervert his God-given power to serve with self-emptying love to dominate, control and enslave people. The author emphasizes the need to discover the true meaning of priestly ministry as *diakonia* or self-emptying service as the language and power of priesthood.

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Introduction

Priest is sent for the service of Christ's Gospel.¹ What makes Christian priesthood unique is its fundamental language and its power.

¹ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* 5 (hereafter *PDV*), (Mumbai: St. Paul's Publications, 1993), 12.

Life and ministry of the priests are complimentary and interconnected notions. The Decree on Priestly Life and Ministry (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*) of Vatican II clearly states that the life itself is ministry and the ministry itself is the life of a priest. Priests are specially chosen for taking care of the souls,² thereby the priesthood is different from other professions or vocations. Consequently, those who take care of the souls should know first and foremost the language and power of the call. Priestly power is closely connected with taking charge of the household of God. Priest is the faithful servant of God who is worthy of trust in God's house. Christ has built up the house of God, and those who believe in Christ become "the sanctuary of God." Since priest is in charge of the household, *diakonia* is Christ's unique and sublime example for a priest as Jesus has shown to the apostles during the establishment of Eucharist at the Last Supper. This paper makes a pastoral theological attempt to delve into the fundamental language and power of Christian priesthood (*diakonia*) in the light of contemporary pastoral scenario of priestly ministry. The meaning of Christian priesthood becomes clear when we see it in the light of the scriptural witness about priesthood. First of all, let us discuss the foundational principle of Christian priesthood in the light of the OT priesthood.

1. Faithfulness as the Foundation of Priestly Power

Israelites got disturbed and deviated from God, when Moses "delayed" to come down from the mountain. They had been strongly tempted to make a temporary god (idol), golden calf out of their gold/ornaments (Ex 32:1-6). This unfaithfulness to Yahweh remains as a serious deviation from the One and the True living God. The institution of the Old Testament priesthood is attributed to Moses; i.e. as he went up to the mountain only the sons of Levi remained faithful to Yahweh while all the other eleven tribes were unfaithful. The sons of Levi helped Moses to destroy the golden calf (idol) and the idolaters. This faithfulness to Yahweh remains as the foundation stone of the priesthood of the OT. It seems that Moses made the tribe of Levi a priestly class

² *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 1 (hereafter PO).

and entrusted the affairs of the divine with them. Evidently, there is a difference between prophets and Moses; God speaks to prophets in dreams, known to them in visions, however Moses is "entrusted with all my house," (power) and God speaks to him "face to face." Num 12: 6-8.

Though the priesthood of the NT is entirely different from that of the OT, we could see an obvious link from the OT as the faithfulness to Yahweh with the priestly power as the faithful servant of the house (Mt 24:45-51). Jesus was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses also "was faithful in all God's house. Yet Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses" (Heb 3:1-6). Christ the High Priest was faithful over God's house as a son (Heb 3:6). Christ has become "a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people" (Heb 2:17). The author of the Letter to Hebrews affirms that Christ's position in the house of God is higher than that of Moses.³ Priesthood finds its meaningfulness in keeping faithfulness to the will of the Father and that of Christ. Saint Paul speaks about the inevitability of faithfulness to those who minister Christ; it is the basic requirement for the man found faithful in the ministry of Christ (1Cor 4:1-2).

2. Priestly Power: A Shared Power

As Jesus has been faithful to the will of the Father until the last moment of his earthly life (Phil 2:8), the apostles and those who believe in his name should also be committed fully to the will of the Father (Mt 7:21). Jesus established a close relationship with his mission and the mission of the Apostles: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21; 13:20; 17:18). The apostles are empowered by the power of Christ. "Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me" (Lk 10:16). In this way, the priestly mission and the power are the same mission and power of Jesus who received from his Father.⁴

Albert Cardinal Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest According to the New Testament* (Herefordshire, Gracewing, Publishing, 2009) 96.

If this priestly power is one and the same that of Jesus, then a priest is never supposed to exercise his priestly power and mission for his own sake or out of his personal interest (Jn 15:5); rather completely committed (faithfulness) to the will of Christ and his Father. As a steward and dispenser of divine mysteries, priest is a “special *witness to the Invisible*;⁵ prolongs the presence of Christ. He is the sacramental representation of Christ who is the Head and Shepherd, authoritatively proclaiming the Word and continuing the acts of forgiveness and other salvific activities of Christ in the celebrations of the sacraments.⁶

3. Priestly Power: A Sacramental Power

The priests are “rulers of God’s people,”⁷ however, the power of priesthood is not the power to over rule or dominate the faithful but it is purely sacramental power to build up the community of faithful according to the Gospel of Christ. It is the power to build up the body of Christ with “the greatest kindness after the model of our Lord.”⁸ For this power, faithfulness to God and His People is an absolute criterion. When this sacred power is misunderstood or trivialized; or sometimes it is made to compromise with secular power which exercises to rule over the people (Mk 10: 42), it is quite impossible to find a meaningful celebration of priesthood because the sacramental power of priesthood is the power to serve (*diakonia*) and not to be served (Mk 10:44-45). Christ has transferred the sacramental power to the apostles to forgive sins, which is absolutely the divine power; “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Lk 5:21). The Risen Lord appointed his apostles to forgive sins in the world; “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (Jn 20:22-23). The priest is appointed by Christ to continue the sanctifying act of the Holy Spirit by forgiving sins, which is the sole

⁵John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of my Priestly Ordination* (Carmel Publishing Centre, Trivandrum, 1997) 75.

⁶PDV 15.

⁷PO 6

⁸PO 6.

authority of God. Accordingly, priestly power is seen as the shared divine power of Christ which is also the power over the Body of Christ.

1. Sacramental Power over the Body of Christ

Power of priesthood is the ministry of governance (*munuspastorale*) received in the sacrament not for destruction but for building up of the community of the People of God (2 Cor10:8).⁹ The sacred power that Christ has transmitted to the apostles can be considered as the power over 'the Body of Christ,' that can be understood in two ways; power towards Eucharistic Body of Christ and the Mystical Body of Christ (the people of God). Since this priestly power is sacramental, no secular power can be attributed to the priesthood; furthermore, it is absolutely the power of sanctification.

On account of the spiritual opacity, sometimes the sacramental celebrations as well as the other priestly ministries degenerate into means of socialization or mere ritual celebration, and thereby, a cultic priesthood is re-created. In this regard, we find the necessity of reconsidering or re-stating the vitality of sacramental theology of priesthood in the perspective of *diakonia*. The salvation economy continues through the sacraments of the Church by way of the essential interconnectedness of Logos-Spirit operations. Church, the sacrament of salvation, recreates and reunites the human person into the Mystical Body of Christ. In this sense, we can consider the event of the institution of the holy Eucharist which is inseparably connected with the Washing of the Feet as the paradigm for priestly language and power. The ultimate motive of priestly life is the giving of one's-self (*diakonia* – kenotic service) for the life of the world as well as everyone who comes in contact with the life of a priest.

The priestly life (mission) is closely connected with the celebration of the Eucharist. However, it does not make a meaningful celebration of faith, unless it is essentially related with the celebration of the Washing of the Feet (*diakonia*). Evidently, *diakonia* is the very

John Paul II, *Pastores Gregis* 43 (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 2003) 112.-113.

process of de-individualization, which in other words, is the act of personalisation. Individualization presupposes an egoistic way of life, while personalization is relational; and thereby, it ultimately presupposes communion. Considering the theology of priesthood in the perspective of sacramental power, it is a relationship with the notion of being human which has to be understood essentially as relational in character; relation with oneself (integrity of the personhood), with the other (fellowship with the other), harmony with the nature (cosmic integrity), and finally, union with the Trinity (divine *koinonia*). This three dimensional relationship makes the priesthood meaningful.

Consequently, being human is basically the process of an event of becoming divine. They are not being separated realities rather intensely connected notions. Based on this being-becoming trajectory there are different dimensions of *diakonia* which necessarily presupposes *koinonia*.

i. Diakonia as Motivational Precision

Christ the perfect model of Christian priesthood who has shown clearly *diakonia* as the power and language of priestly ministry. "The priest, who is called to be a "living image" of Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church, should seek to reflect in himself, as far as possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the Incarnate Son of God and which is reflected with particular liveliness in his attitudes towards others as we see narrated in the Gospels."¹⁰ It is by creating such an attitude one can fulfil his priestly vocation and ministry. The attitude of *diakonia* provides an undeniable ideological transparency to priesthood. It clearly supplies a philosophical foundation to what we are going to explore. Even though Jesus Christ was fully aware of what he was going to do with the Washing of the Feet, the apostles were not. That may be the reason why Peter was totally disturbed by the act of washing the feet. Priesthood is for the people, invoking divine presence and life to the people by rendering kenotic service (*diakonia*). Instead of alienating oneself from day today needs and problems of human life, priest should serve the people in their personal and communitarian needs. As Christ is the exact representation of God's being (Heb 1:3),

¹⁰ PDV43.

the priest must be the living image of Christ in the world. He should be the true face of God who is living with people. Motivational crisis is the most tragic problem which we encounter today in priestly life. Motivational transparency is to be achieved through the formation of both academic and spiritual realms. If one fails to understand this motivational precision the priestly life would be in a state of meaningless ambiguity.

The prophets in the OT as well as the apostles in the NT are specially chosen groups to be sent for God. They have to project the Almighty incomprehensible God and the Son of God in the person of Jesus Christ to the world. They are not supposed to project their own dis/ability, wisdom/foolishness, hope/hopelessness etc. It is very clear that we should project and proclaim the person of Jesus Christ and His life-giving message in and through our personal life and witness. Compromising with the temptation of projecting oneself instead of Christ, priest may desecrate (mis/use) altar and pulpit for their own personal vanity. This may lead to the tragic end; narcissism. The Sacred Council warns with the words of Saint Paul: "They (priests) should act towards people not according to what may please men, but according to the demands of Christian doctrine and life."¹¹ If a priest projects himself at the cost of projecting Christ, then the priestly life would be foreign to priestly language and power and it creates utter confusion.

ii. Diakonia as an act of Bending down [Descending]

It is a customary hospitality for the Jews to provide water for ritual ablution (Jn 2:6) to a guest who is visiting one's house. As a sign of devotion, disciples would customarily render this service to their master. Christ who is the Master (Lord) himself takes the form of a servant at the Foot Washing. Jesus took off his robe. He picked up a towel and tied it around himself (Jn 13:4). The very appearance of Christ is different. It is a challenge to the disciples to make their priestly service in the form of a servant.

Priestly power is the most sublime power of kenotic bending down for the life of the other. Divine descending (incarnation) is the intrinsic

¹¹ PO 6; Gal 1:10

principle of human ascendance (deification). Irenaeus made a daring statement that the Word of God was made human in order to make the human person divine.¹² He succinctly points out that God created human nature with the ability to cleave to become one with God. Athanasius reaffirms; "For he became man that we might become divine; and he revealed himself through a body that we might receive an idea of the invisible Father; and he endured insults from men that we might inherit incorruption."¹³ Christ himself bends down before each individual disciple. The sublime act of bending down implies de-individualization which doesn't mean de-personalization. That means by the very act of bending down, Christ never loses his identity as being the Son of God assuming human nature (Phil 2:6-7). He is truly divine and human without any kind of assimilation of divine-human natures. However, he renders an example of service which has to be taken up by each and every disciple. In this very act of bending down Christ gives us an example of self renunciation (*kenosis*).

Christ has already undergone disfiguration and de-humanization (Is 52:14) in and through the cross, and thereby he grants us salvation. Accordingly, it is significant to note that becoming divine is the fruit of humanization by various events of disfiguration/*de-humanization* happen in our daily lives. Christ's death is "the life of all," which we proclaim at the sacrifice as his victory and our mystery where we find the salvation for all.¹⁴ Christ's death is "life-creating death" (Saint Basil). Christ gives us a challenging call to become his disciples by accepting one's own cross and following him in his/her physical life (Mk 8:34). Sacraments and the Word of God remind us this essential call to discipleship, and encourage each one to take up one's own cross. The Word of God becomes a mortal body in order to transform the human body into the immortal glory of God. God assumes the material body of humanity which is perishable and mortal; in this material body we have to see and experience the immortal God in Jesus Christ. Athanasius says, "Now this is a proof that Christ is God the Word, and the Power

¹² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III.19.1.

¹³ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 54.

¹⁴ Ambrose, *On the Belief in the Resurrection* 2.46 (NPNF X).

of God. For whereas human things cease, and the Word of Christ abides, it is clear to all eyes that what ceases is temporary, but that He Who abides is God, and the true Son of God, His only begotten-Word.”¹⁵

The assumed human body of Christ is immolated on the altar of the cross just as the sacrificial lamb in the Old Testament; John the Baptist introduces Jesus as “the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). The only begotten Word is the Father’s sign of salvation to the whole world; the Son’s sign of salvation is His self-emptying suffering and death on the cross. Christ assumes total disfiguration of his body on the cross which leads to the transformed and glorified body of Easter. In this way, doctrine of the cross brings the dynamic communion of divine-human-cosmic events together. It signifies the perfect relationship with God, the human person and the creation. It also brings us into communion with God and the other. Christ has made an absolute self-giving in his suffering on the cross. In this regard disfiguration on the cross is the very basic principle power of transfiguration of the human person as well as the cosmos towards the organic communion in God.

iii. Diakonia as an Act of Washing of the Feet

Jesus humiliates himself by taking form of a servant. Washing the feet of the disciples shows an example of self-sacrificing humility. It also essentially implies the spiritual life of priest’s availability to the other. We trivialize the spirituality of the power of priesthood, when we, therefore, mis/interpret the spiritual life as an implementation of certain canonical obligations or fulfilling certain exercises of piety. However, the Church speaks of it as the humble giving of one’s self to God and others.

Diakonia is an act of self-giving (*kenosis*). John Paul II speaks of the Eucharist as being at the service of the least; he says that it is not by chance that the gospel of John contains “no account of the institution of the Eucharist, but instead relates the “washing of the feet” (Jn 13: 1-20); by bending down to wash the feet of his disciples, Jesus explains

¹⁵ Athanasius, *Incarnation- of the Word* 55 (NPNF IV).

the meaning of the Eucharist unequivocally.”¹⁶ In this sense, Eucharistic celebration finds its meaning in an ethical praxis of Christian love. Jesus goes beyond the cultic celebration of the Passover to witness the kenotic sacrifice of washing of the feet of the other. This clearly manifests that the full participation in divine life is not only through the sacramental celebration, but also through the sacramental act of washing the feet of the other or the self-emptying service of the other. However, we should understand this sacramental praxis as not gaining/losing power but as the ultimate priestly authority.

iv. Diakonia as Priestly Authority

No priestly authority is possible without *diakonia*, the priestly power. It is always seen in relationship with authority. What makes Jesus being different is his authority (Mk 1:22). The common people recognise that the teaching of Jesus is different from that of their traditional teachers. Jesus has spoken and done everything with authority. Whatever spoken in authority is undeniable truth which becomes piercing words in the hearts of people.

There seems to be an intimate connection between *latreia* (Latria) “service” (used in a non-cultic sense, secular sense) and *diakonia* “service,” “to wait at table” in the NT. They are indiscriminately used sometimes to refer to the one and the same thing. *Latreia* can mean “service for money,” “service of God” or “liturgical worship, while *diakonia* has meanings such as “ministering,” “performing a material or liturgical task in the community in obedience to a higher superior, personal service rendered to another, and the office of the diaconate in the Church. *Diakonia* is service of love.¹⁷ This may allude to the fact that liturgy sends forth the participant to a life of service. Priestly life finds its meaning in *diakonia* as authority. It is neither service for money nor on any kind of benefit; rather it is a sacramental praxis.

Priestly authority is never spoken in terms of secular power. “Persons in authority are “spiritual” when they place themselves at the service of

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine* ‘Stay With us Lord,’ 28.

¹⁷ Beyer, *Diakonia*, in Gerhard Kittel ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)* vol.II, (Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1964, repr.1983) 81-93,81.

what the Spirit wants to realize through the gifts which he distributes to every member of the community, in the charismatic project of the institute.”¹⁸ While the priestly power is misunderstood as secular one, then priests lose authority, because they try to gain secular power by accumulating wealth and try to make priestly life a more comfortable one which may completely be alienated from the priestly language and power of taking care of the souls. Accordingly, alienation from the people may result in losing authority, which indeed, is the losing of credibility.

Catholic priesthood can be understood only in its intense and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, the Church, and the people. John Paul II says that the sacrament of Holy Orders configures the priests to “Christ, the Head and Shepherd, the Servant and Steward of the Church.”¹⁹ The sacramental consecration endows the priests “with spiritual power’ which is a share of the authority whereby Jesus Christ guides the Church his Spirit.”²⁰ Hence, the priest is a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the Head and Shepherd.²¹ It is a mutual relationship and existence sacramentally connected with Christ and his Mystical Body. On being one with the Mystical Body of Christ, every priest is entrusted with the power of Christ’s mission of sanctification.

v. Diakonia as the Power of Sanctification

Jesus said to Peter; “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me” (Jn 13:8). Sharing the power of priesthood of Christ with his apostles necessarily belongs to the act of *diakonia*. God alone is the holy one and the sanctifier who wills to take some people as helpers to become the humble servants of God’s work of sanctification. Therefore, the priests are consecrated by God to sanctify the people of God through

¹⁸ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *The Service of Authority and Obedience*, 13 (Carmel Publishing House, Trivandrum, 2008)

¹⁹ PDV3

²⁰ PDV21

²¹ PDV15

the Word and sacraments.²² Power of sanctification is, therefore, the basic power of Christian priesthood. The power that sanctifies the other is interrelated with the sanctification of oneself. No one can disprove the authenticity of the coming of Christ, for he claims that he has been sanctified by his Father (Jn 10:36). Moreover, in his priestly prayer, Christ prays to his Father that he sanctifies himself for the sanctification of those who believe in his name (Jn 17:19). The priestly prayer of Jesus proves that the power of sanctification is a priestly power and it also clearly speaks about the impossibility of sanctification of the other without the sanctification of oneself. Therefore, a priest may be incapable to administer the sanctifying/sacramental act meaningfully unless sanctifies himself. Priest sanctifies himself for the sanctification of each and every believer. "The formation of future priests, both diocesan and religious, and lifelong assiduous care for their **personal sanctification** in the ministry and for the constant updating of their pastoral commitment is considered by the Church one of the most demanding and important tasks for the future of the evangelization of humanity."²³ An act of sanctification is the sacramental (sanctifying) act and the power of priesthood that has been done through the proper language of the priesthood i.e, kenotic love and service (*diakonia*) in accordance with the priestly representation of Christ the most perfect priest: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus; who, though he was in the form of God; did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself; taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness, and being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil 2:5-8). Christian priesthood is in accordance with the priesthood of Christ; therefore, the power of priesthood is fundamentally the same that of the priesthood of Christ. Priestly language is the same language which Jesus has spoken to his Father and the power is the same which Jesus has shown in his life and ministry in the world. This sacramental power of sanctification is necessarily endowed with the task of its proclamation to the whole

²² PO 5

²³ PDV 2 (emphasis is mine)

world. Christ's priesthood is both prophetic (proclamation) and kingly (service of charity).²⁴

vi. Diakonia as Power of Proclamation

Since *diakonia* is integrally interrelated with every sacramental celebration, it is connected with the proclamation of sacramental praxis. It doesn't mean *to say* something, but *to do* something concretely for the sake of building the Body of Christ. This means that the Church doesn't need a group of so called *pious* priests; however she needs priests who are fully committed to do the will of God and to witness Christ. The apostles were asked to do three things by Christ as his memorial. First, by instituting the Holy Eucharist, Christ said clearly, "do this in memory of me." Secondly, by washing the feet of the apostles, he says; "Now, if I washed your feet, even though I am Lord and Teacher, you too **must wash** one another's feet" (Jn 13:14). Thirdly, "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34). All these three are one and the same command in the perspective of the kenotic service to the humanity. Every priest should be a living memory of Jesus Christ who says: "Do this in memory of me." This memorial is never being a souvenir of the past; rather it is re-presenting the past in the present reality in and through the daily Eucharistic celebration. Chauvet states the vitality of ethics in Eucharistic celebration: "To wash one another's feet is to live existentially the memory of Christ that the Eucharist makes us to live ritually."²⁵ 'To live ritually' means to live ethically. Breaking and giving life for eternal life of the other is the fulfilment of every sacramental celebration.

In this sense, Eucharistic celebration or the priesthood of the NT has a unique meaning other than that of the OT sacrifice or priesthood. Ethically it is praxis oriented; furthermore it finds meaning in sacramental praxis of proclamation. It demands practical proclamation of the Gospel in building up of the Body of Christ: Chauvet says;

²⁴ CCC 1070.

²⁵ Louis-Marie Chauvet, Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (trans.), *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1995) 261.

[T]he status of “priesthood” and “sacrifice” is new with the very newness of *Jesus Christ* and of the fulfilment of the promise by the *gift of the Spirit*. From now on, the new priesthood is the priesthood of the people of God. The temple of the new covenant is formed by the body of Christians, living stones fitted together by the Holy Spirit over the cornerstone that is Christ himself. And the sacred work, the cult, the sacrifice that is pleasing to God, is the confession of faith lived in the agape of sharing in service to the poorest, of reconciliation, and of mercy.²⁶

vii. *Diakonia Towards Koinonia*

As a minister of the sacramental celebration, priest has the task and power to unite the faithful into their own community and finally towards the trinitarian communion. The Spirit transforms the human person into being fully alive and fully human (Ireneaus), which transcends biological living and towards being in relationship and communion with the Trinity. With regard to this sacramental metamorphosis, in being fully alive there are twofold human tasks; to protect human dignity and cosmic integrity. Priest is the minister who protects human dignity by rendering his service to the other, and thereby protecting the cosmic integrity too. However, both are mutually interrelated and complementing each other.

Jesus has shown the power of priesthood in an absolutely radical way, being the form of a servant (Phil 2:7) which radically the gesture of love. God put himself in *diakonia* at the service of humankind in order to bring them into full communion with God.²⁷ “That office, however, which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is, in the strict sense of the term, a service, which is called very expressively in sacred scripture a *diakonia* or ministry (cf Acts 1:17 and 25; 21:19; Rom 11:13; 1Tim 1:12).”²⁸ Priest should be “a man of communion”; he

²⁶ Louis-Marie Chauvet, Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (trans.), *Symbol and Sacrament*) 260.

²⁷ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis* 42 (2003).

²⁸ *Lumen Gentium* 24.

has the capacity to relate to others and he should know the depths of the heart of the people.²⁹

Ecclesial communion is integrally interrelated with the power of priesthood in the perspective of an eschatological communion. Schmemmann rightly states, “the whole liturgy is *sacramental*, that is, one transforming act and one ascending movement. And the very goal of this movement of ascension is to take us out of “this world” and to make us partakers of the *world to come*.”³⁰ Liturgical celebration is also the celebration of the fulfillment of one’s own sacramental task. In this sense, it is the celebration of *diakonia* towards *koinonia*. Jesus showed us the paradigm of *koinonia* at the time of the first Eucharistic celebration by washing the feet of his disciples. The washing of the feet is called “the sacrament of Christian authority.”³¹ The Eucharistic celebration and the washing of the feet are integrally linked to each other. The sacramental task guides the human person towards reconciliation with God and the other.

5. A Pastoral Re-reading of Diakonia

Since the contemporary society is unwittingly yielding itself to three contagious diseases (temptations) such as greed, lust and amnesia the sublime language and power of priesthood is also being manipulated by ignoring the substantial meaning of *diakonia*, and thereby, considering priestly power as the power of becoming Master of everyone and everything. Consequently, the ministers of the Church also may give an excessive concentration for extreme greed and lust. As a result of yielding to such grave temptations they may create the third stage; amnesia which is forgetting oneself, the other and God (contradicting

²⁹ PDV43.

³⁰ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002) 42. Vellian observes Schmemmann’s thought on the purpose of the worship is to constitute the Church. See Jacob Vellian, “Theological Dimension of Liturgy,” *Studia Liturgica* 30 (2000) 1-13, 1.

³¹ Raniero Cantalamessa, *The Eucharist Our Sanctification*, Frances Lonergan Villa trans., (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993) 54.

memory). Misinterpreting the message of Cross, devaluing *diakonia* and sacrifices would lead the leaders of the sacramental community to look at their ministry in terms of wealth and power. When this happens there is a clear degradation of priestly ministry and it creates an idol (golden calf) in opposition to the living God by giving priority to gaining wealth and power, instead of being icon of Christ. In fact, becoming an idol is losing one's personal integrity.

The Church is absolutely not the place where putting down our net for catching fish (un/knowingly using the faithful for wealth and power); rather considering the priestly authority as being fishers (protecting human dignity and rendering *kenotic* service) to all wo/men (Mk 1:17).

Conclusion

In the context of various scandals that challenge the credibility of priestly ministry and especially the misuse and abuse of priestly power, it is imperative to think and re-think, read and re-read, construct and re-construct the divine call of the priestly vocation in the light of *diakonia* as priestly power. The temptation to be the first, sometimes, even at the cost of the other, seems to be a part of human nature. However, an apostle is called to deny one's self and follow *diakonia* as priestly power for the wellbeing of the other. In this way, priesthood is fundamentally a divine call and divine choice not to become first among others but to become *Servant-leader* for the last and the underprivileged. It is a challenging call not to be served, but to serve and give one's life where there is death, to make peace where there is no peace, to create a culture of love where there is no love and compassion, and to heal the wounds of the broken hearted where there is brokenness. Accordingly, *diakonia* is the priestly language and power that de-individualizes and liberates the one who is called to priestly ministry to protect human dignity from de-humanization and to lead everyone to divine communion.

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Women's Experience of the Exercise of Power in the Church

Pearl Drego

When power is misused it leads to humiliation and even destruction. The abuses of power can be on various levels, physical, intellectual, emotional, organizational. Long-term power abuses, besides being immoral and inhuman, are debilitating and agonising for individuals and groups, depriving them of life energy and mental focus. There have been many exposures of such abuse in recent decades, bringing out the exploitative exercise of power by clergy, especially over innocent children and helpless women. The structure of positions and services rendered by clergy have sometimes been used for personal gain, financial misappropriation and even for criminal purposes. There are communities that live in fear and suspicion of their priests and of higher ecclesiastical authorities. The author reminds the readers that there is a growing awareness of women's rights and dignity; an awareness that their potential is not fully utilized. She is convinced that we People of God, the real Church, do not need the power that comes from their rulers. They have the power and promise of the Holy Spirit. What would Jesus say? Which side would he be on?

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Introduction

The whole Paschal Mystery of Jesus is a journey from power, through powerlessness to re-empowerment, a movement that characterises the individual Christian journey through life to eternity, the corporate journey of ecclesial communities, as well as the pathway to divinity for the wider community of humankind. Our commitment to

the various aspects and dimensions of this movement holds an urgency for us, and it has practical consequences for transforming those attitudes and structures that inhibit our imitation of the commands of Jesus and the model of redeeming love that he missioned us with.

An important ingredient of this on-going humanisation cum Christianisation of human life and interactions is gender equity and equality. Women's real struggles for justice at the grass roots and larger campaigns that uphold human rights, ethnicity of cultural identities, social status of minorities and the dignity of oppressed groups have shaped our understanding of Church systems in radical ways that bring a newness of life, energy and unifying love into our liturgies, our prayers, our mission activities and our everyday lives. However, there are many negative elements that continue to hamper the absorption of Jesus' redeeming love by Church communities and structures.

A useful way to continually identify and address the healthy gender equity and gender humanisation status of any scenario, is to analyse the use of power and privilege, the exercise of authority and leadership so as to gauge the utilisation and application of secular and Christian norms and values experienced by women and men in a given situation. The positive and negative uses of power as a lens to assess the gender humanisation and gender dehumanisation of civil and Church structures is useful for this enterprise.

Overview of Power

Power can be understood in its simplest form as a capacity to be or do something. In this sense I have the power to speak, to hear, to paint, to memorize, to write, to compose poetry, to play a musical instrument. This power can be innate or learnt. It may be natural gift or an acquired one, or a combination of both. In this sense women have often been denied certain powers because of restrictive understandings of what is typical for a woman, what are so-called "feminine" qualities and by role expectations in culture and society. This negative understanding of woman's power by clergy has led to subsidiary roles and one-down status of women in the Church. Even when power is used benevolently, it may still be a top-down pattern rather than a caring-sharing pattern.

Another meaning for power is more linked with authority and it can be used in a dominating way as power to control, rule, decide for others, leading to authoritarian attitudes. In this meaning too, women in the Church have been subjected to dominance, having to be obedient to the norms and rules established by the clergy for their conduct and activities. The spiritualizing of the value of obedience in a negative way has increased the oppression of women by clerical domination.

When power is misused then it leads to humiliation and even destruction. The abuses of power can be on various levels, physical, intellectual, emotional, organizational. Long-term power abuses, besides being immoral and inhuman, are debilitating and agonising for individuals and groups, depriving them of life energy and mental focus. There have been many exposures of such abuse in recent decades, bringing out the exploitative exercise of power by clergy, especially over innocent children and helpless women. The structure of positions and services rendered by clergy have sometimes been used for personal gain, financial misappropriation and even for criminal purposes. There are communities that live in fear and suspicion of their priests and of higher ecclesiastical authorities. Strong indictments on clericalism and accumulation of inhibiting control are frequent on the internet and on social networking.

We have often heard the phrase, "Knowledge is power." Priests can use their knowledge in positions of power to dominate through creating uncertainty and even panic. When women are not given clear instructions and information, when they are given inadequate information, or given data at the last minute, or are at the receiving end of changed schedules and appointments without due warning, there is a feeling of being destabilized and insecure. Structures and patterns of information sharing need to be set in place to allow for timely preparation, appropriate scheduling and freedom to opt out of programmes. Healthy ecclesial structures exercise power through open-ended information systems, prompt delivery of data regarding changes or new opportunities and positive use of authority to guide and bless.

The exercise of power through delegation and distribution of responsibilities, accompanied by regular support and feedback is a healthy method of operating in all kinds of organized structures as it

inspires trust, hope, worthiness and integrity. This is the way in which power needs to be exercised in the Church so that women feel they are an integral part of Church structures and not subordinated by them. The perception of women as co-partners in redemption, as fellow humans in the day to day events and outreach of the Church, and as co-creators of ecclesial harmony will lead to a truly Jesus-led fellowship of equals.

Power in the Church

We can assess the manner in which ecclesial power is exercised by gauging the extent of choices, preferences and applications to appropriate needs that are made available to women. We can also get a sense of the positive or negative use of power structures by evaluating their outcomes in terms of whether or not they are fulfilling, satisfying, enhancing, and ennobling of persons and communities. Besides, there are situations when, though women are given a choice, the distance between them and the priests is so great that those to whom it is offered do not have the required ability or self-confidence to make an enlightened choice, and so they end up saying, "You choose for us," "You do for us," "You tell us what to do," "We really don't know what is best," or "We accept whatever happens."

The neglect and subordination of women is maintained by the ideology of patriarchy. Patriarchy is the legitimisation of male dominance, superiority and control. Men who follow patriarchy think that their position and control is justified while women in the Church who imbibe patriarchy see themselves as dependent and having to submit to the choices of male leaders, priests and bishops. When situations arise that need rules to be changed or adjusted, women are sometimes afraid to approach authorities for help, or to request conferences of religious, or of bishops and priests to address their urgent problems and difficulties.

The patriarchal view of priesthood is based on a false cultic superiority which is laden with personal prerogatives. The fact that priesthood is a male-preserve lends itself to the spiritualisation of hierarchical relations. The ordination of male deacons is perceived by women as another ploy of patriarchy. One wonders if the advent of deaconesses will be acceptable in the current scenario. It is time that the Church actively

promoted the lateral concept of priesthood, as facilitator and representative, ministering on behalf of the People of God, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light"(1 Pet. 2:9).

In the lateral or mutual concept of priesthood, the attitude is, "We together, the people of God, do this," rather than, "I the priest am doing it for you the people." The mighty act of God, the power of leading from darkness into God's marvellous light, needs to be a joint ministry of all believers. Many times it is women and children who point the way, who exercise the power of God's ministry. Patriarchy breeds resentment towards women who are powerful, efficient, talented, charismatic. Strong women are seen as "unfeminine" and perceived a threat to Church power, leading to the unfortunate exclusion and even demonization of women.

The distribution of particular qualities between what is "masculine" and "feminine" is a cultural construction that has conditioned the structures of the Church in relation to women, creating the slogan that men lead and women follow. In this construction, men are supposed to be intellectual, with tough physical endurance, organising skills, rationally oriented, self-confident, etc. while women are supposed to be emotional, physically fragile, relationship-oriented, needing support, etc. However, such conditioning is false and untenable. "While accepting the biological differences between women and men, we can see today that the psychological differences between them are based on historical and cultural factors. These differences are not innate, springing from a fixed "nature" of man or "nature" of woman, but rather from family and cultural conditioning. This is why what is typically masculine or typically feminine differs from society to society and from age to age. So the biological complementarity of man and woman is a sharing of mutual resources, a giving to each other as equals in a partnership, a co-operation built on respect ..." (Drego, 1981).

¹ Pearl Drego, "Women in the Church", *BIMA* 2, Ponmudi, Kerala, November 20-30 1980; *Vidyajyoti*, no. 8 (September 1981): 382-388.

Cultural attributes of power can only be challenged when these gender stereotypes are dissolved to face the real talents and capacities of women and men according to their gifts and charisms, when the sacrality of Church power is de-mythologised and when the mystical halo of social status power of the class of priests as literate, theologically educated, and divinely ordained is squarely confronted for its obsolete and inhuman character. In other countries women are already leaders of parish councils and diocesan councils and hold the post of Chancellor as for example in the territory of Adelaide in Australia. There is a general consensus of opinion that where women have important roles to play in Church structures there is less domestic violence, less child neglect and less sexual abuse by clergy.

Kinds of Power in the Church

- a) Church structures and activities are laced with liturgical power. This is usually vested with the clergy and has rules and regulations from the Bishops' conferences. Unfortunately, in India we do not have official diocesan jobs, paid for by the diocese which empowers women to design liturgies for ordinary time and for special celebrations. For example, a friend of mine, is Liturgy Consultant of the diocese of Townsville in Australia, in which capacity she has designed liturgies for parish and inter-parish events, even creating the liturgies for ordination of priests and bishops. She is a sister of the Good Samaritan congregation which supports her to retain this position.
- b) Administrative power in the Church is heavily on the side of the clergy and most women I have interviewed believe that control, power and organisation is ultimately in the hands of the clergy, even where women are actively taking responsibility for Church work and activities, and ensuring that these are successful. The credit finally goes to the priest or bishop in charge. Such an exercise of power which is gender-biased, combined with ecclesiastical hierarchical power usually leads to excessive and oppressive bureaucratisation of Church structures.
- c) Pastoral power extends the clergy's personal exercise of power over families and their needs, as well as power over children's lives

and catechesis of youth. The power of rejection by Church leaders is a negative experience that women complain about. The validation of male power within the family and reinforces a class of families that imitates clerical authoritarianism, bringing inattitudinal and behavioural traits of this power into parenting and spousal relationships. The interpersonal effects can be seen in power plays such as divide and rule, retribution, favouritism, exclusivism, rigid communication, domineering language, the demand of slavish obedience, etc. The failure to use inclusive language in liturgies, homilies, church documents and literature is part of the syndrome of patriarchy.

If Church structures are built on the ideology of patriarchy then they are not built on the ethics of Jesus who valued each person and gave importance to women all through his life and ministry. If the clergy, operating in current Church structures truly evolve to see their ministry in a lateral human fashion, aiming to build the people of God according to the charisms of the Spirit, then we will have leaders who are truly pastoral, facilitative, and supporting. They will be assistants and listeners rather than controllers in Church discernment processes, in goal-setting discussions and in the preparations for pastoral decisions. They will be caring and gentle, non-judgemental, non-threatening, non-punitive, forgiving, appreciating, affirming, bringing joy and inspiring hope.

These changes are certainly taking place today in many Church leaders. We do experience signs of hope that the equality of women in the Church is being recognised. In recent times, Church use of opinion surveys and suggestion boxes, the initiatives of repeatedly creating a public forum for expressing needs, feelings, and grievances, active Church dialogue with women's' groups for identifying hurdles, respecting talents and fulfilling aspirations, have increased democratic processes in Church structures. Religious and lay men in these structures have done and are doing realistic soul-searching to change their attitudes and behaviours towards women and work to bring about the much-needed policy changes for gender equality.

The 27th annual meeting of the Indian Theological Association held from 25-29 April 2004, had as its theme, *Concerns of Women: An*

Indian Theological Response. Number 22 of the Final statement reads, "To fulfill the vision of Jesus calls for a new way of being church: a discipleship of equals. The communion ecclesiology acknowledged in the Second Vatican Council, paves the way for an egalitarian and participatory model that recovers the traditions of women's discipleship and leadership ..."

From the past century onwards, conclaves and workshops, womens' commissions and councils, national work groups and think tanks, international networks and internet lists, have focussed on empowering women at all levels, thus bringing new awareness of baptismal rights, of the priesthood of the people of God, and increased participation in Church activities and structures.

Local Synods and national CRI conferences, seminars and work groups, involving theologians and clergy, urban and rural folk, dalit, tribal and marginalised groups, women and men of all categories, languages and castes, are bringing people and leaders closer to each other and increasing solidarity across boundaries, thus giving women more space to make their contribution, more access to power and much more personal freedom of choice. If these trends are promoted with speed and intensity, we will surely have dynamic structures for the building and sustaining of healthy ecclesial communion in which women are in the forefront exercising inculturated spiritual leadership with dignity and confidence.

Rightful expectations of women

Scripture has plentiful resources for framing rightful expectations that women can have of Church structures – expectations that are modelled after the patterns of God's dealings with humankind from the beginning, through the various courses of history. In the story of creation, Genesis 1 we learn that humans are created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore humans are to live, to relate, to work and to build with the power of divine attributes given to them. They have power over all created things, which are available for food and for making fruitful. This style of dominion is what Church structures can imitate. God's covenantal love is built on mutual agreement, even though God

is all-powerful and mighty. All through salvation history, power and authority, whether through queens, kings, judges, prophets, or leaders, is to be used under the guidance of God whose power is given to protect, to dispense justice, to save from enemies, to be secure in the land, to cultivate, multiply and live for generations in prosperity and peace. Such a caring, overarching love is the vision for Church structures and Church leadership to follow in concrete, contextualized ways so that women and all under their guidance get God-given blessedness.

Those in Church leadership positions, whether clergy or laity have this model to follow, integrating power with love and mercy so that there is no discrimination, fear or timidity is created in others. On the contrary they receive understanding and forgiveness, especially those who, including women, have been on the receiving end of the misuse of power. The word *dunamis* or power occurs in significant pericopes of the New Testament. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you," Mary is told, (Lk. 1:35). The Mighty One, *dunatos*, has done great things for her 1:49. Mary's Magnificat upturns the existing power structures in radical ways giving strength, food, freedom to those disadvantaged.

We behold great miracles of power in the works of Jesus, always for the good of the poor, the needy, the defenceless, the rejected. The *dunamis* or power of Jesus is manifest in his miracles. In the gospel of Mark (5:30), when the woman with haemorrhages is healed, "Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" He tells her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well" (Mk. 5:34). Jesus heals, changes water into wine (Jn.2:11), multiplies loaves and fishes to feed thousands (Lk. 9:16), calms the stormy waters (Mk. 6:51), raises the dead to life (Jn.11:43), using his power for the good of others and the redemption of all. His power works in the context of faith. Jesus says to the centurion, "Go, let it be done for you according to your faith" (Matt. 8:13). To the two blind men whose sight he restored, Jesus says, "According to your faith, let it be done to you" (Matt. 9:29). The miracle power of Jesus is in dialogue with the faith of the people.

The words and deeds of Jesus confirm women's faith and power. Therefore Church structures and liturgies need to reflect women's participation and contribution. The attitude encouraged by Jesus is modelled on how children's faith and trust. Jesus says that it is "to them that the kingdom of heaven belongs" (Lk. 18:16). His use of power is clear when he washes the feet of his disciples and says, "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example that you also should do what I have done to you" (Jn. 13:13-15). In the same discourse Jesus presents his model of power through love and service: "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you" (Jn. 15:12-14).

Jesus gives us his model of powerlessness on the cross in his total surrender to the will of God, but this path ultimately leads to his resurrection and glorification. The empowerment of the Risen Lord is what we too are gifted with through the sacraments and our journey within this paschal mystery... the power to give life, human life and eternal life." That I may come to know him and the power of his resurrection..." (Phil. 3:10). Here too we see that the power of Jesus, which he demonstrated in loving, healing, inspiring, gentle as well as confrontative ways throughout his lifetime is now concentrated, culminated and overflowing through his resurrection. This is where the power in the Church lies. Empowered by the Risen Lord, Church leadership, authority, organising, preaching, is exercised with newness of life and the gaze of eternity. Women in the resurrection are witnesses of new life. They are life-givers like Mary, and so Church structures integrating women will become truly life-giving.

St. Paul reinforces the power of the resurrection theme in his Letter to the Romans: "... and who in terms of the Spirit and of holiness was designated Son of God in power by resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord ..." (Rom. 1:4). And in verse 5, Paul speaks about having received grace and, "our apostolic mission of winning the obedience of faith among all the nations for the honour of his name." This apostolic mission continues to this day and when we hear the

word, "our apostolic mission of winning the obedience of faith..." we get an integral emotional sense of a persuasive action, not a dominating one, a facilitating process rather than a pressurising one. The power Holy Spirit as at Pentecost, (Acts 2:1-4) imbued the exercise of power in early Church so as to create wider and wider circles of communities alive with the grace of God, inspiring us with examples of practice for generations to come.

Personal witness

In 2013, Streevani in Pune, commissioned me to cover Catholic Women in India who are active in theology, leadership, education and Church structures. It was a moving experience to find more than a hundred theologically trained women who have studied, taught, campaigned and won battles in Church and civil society. My study is titled Indian Feminist Theology and Women's Concerns - Reviews, Resources and Remembrance, in *Birthing a New Vision*, Streevani Publications Vol. 21. We can be truly proud of what Catholic Women in India have achieved.

I conclude this article with examples of three consecrated women, two religious and one lay, who describe their experience of the exercise of power in the Church, Noella de Souza, Pauline Chakkalakal and Marita Estor. I have persuaded Marita Estor to write her experience as the positions held today by Catholic women in Germany give us some idea of the tremendous efforts we need to make in India so that our women can shape their destinies and make further contribution with zest and vigour in an organised and structured way. The work of the Indian Christian Women's Movement (ICWM) and Indian Women's Theological Forum (IWTF) are some of the existing successful networks that speak out effectively on women's rights and concerns.

Noella de Souza

Educationist, psychotherapist and feminist Noella de Souza is eloquent on how as a woman she perceives power in the Church and how it is used, bemoaning patriarchy, the internalization of gender inequity, and the domination of clergy. Noella says this about herself and her mission: "I belong to the Missionaries of Christ Jesus and have trained in

Education, Psychotherapy and Counseling. A core team member I am also a research writer with Avehi-Abacus a prominent NGO in Mumbai working to bring about reforms in educational content and pedagogy. In my capacity as psychotherapist and counsellor I work mainly with homemakers who have problems with identity, self esteem, efficacy and worth. A member of Satyashodak, a women's collective in Mumbai, I also collaborate closely with Streevaniin Pune. Actively involved the Indian Christian Women's Movement, I am trying to make our religious and lay women face the challenges of today both in Church and State in a relevant manner. When time and work permits, I give retreats and renewal courses from a feminine perspective to different religious groups around the country.

"My limited experience working towards justice in cases of sexual abuse by clergy showed me a different face of the Church I love and serve. I was told by clerics themselves, that they are taught from the seminary onward that celibacy makes them superior to the non-celibate because it requires a higher degree of internal strength and dedication which is given to the elect by God. They are taught that they are gifted with a special God- given grace to enable them to live on this higher plane. Till today, there are a number of seminarians who are more concerned with finding "some form of status and personal security" in the priesthood than a life of service.

Most priests are holy, humble, unpretentious people, but this is often in the face of a clerical culture, which values high titles and positions such as "Your Eminence, Right Reverend, Very Reverend" etc. which in my opinion are ludicrous distinctions. Though there are numerous bishops and priests who are and always have been exemplary as unselfish and totally dedicated servants of Christ, the system itself, of which they are a part, represents an out-dated way of governing that is dramatically out of sync with a modern world that sees democracy as the more fitting manner of governance.

The tendency among the laity was to deny, minimize, or excuse our clergy from different indignities and shame. This can be attributed to traditional attitudes about the priesthood and the authority of bishops. We are victims of this heritage which tells us that the priest takes the

place of God and we shall be punished for speaking ill of a priest. Nonetheless, on the other hand, many of us have been raised in democratic families that have been brought up on the intrinsic value of the individual. Empowered by this democratic experience and enabled by the common law system, we begin to challenge the very autonomy of the institutional church.

We all know of the fiasco often played out in mission stations between the sisters and the fathers. Conflicts occur regarding work but relationships are affected which result in power play being enacted by the clergy blackmailing the sisters by not agreeing to masses and other sacraments which is the right of the sisters and the duty of the priests! This is a clear display of misuse of sacramental power. There are some congregations who have had the courage to say they will not work within the Church structure and suffer these indignities. They would rather be by themselves and enjoy their mission and life.

I know the members of a Secular Institute were very happy to stay on the periphery, and keep their secular status because were very clear that they wanted to be financially independent and not depend on any parish or diocese, even if they hardly had any means within which to live. Women are very clear about their role in the Church. Some have told me, "The authorities try to suppress the truth, but if we women do not speak, the stones themselves will cry out!" Another very prominent woman member of the Mumbai Church said to me, "We have so much to fight for, and in turn what we fight about is trivialized". I agree with her!

I speak of these incidents against the backdrop of a very historic General Body meeting of the CBCI in Tatanagar in 2008 on Empowerment of Women, which resulted in the formulation of the Gender Policy prepared by the Women's Commission which was adopted by the Bishops Standing Committee for the Indian Church in 2009. We have to be proud that we are the only country where the Conference of Bishops has put out a gender policy. The policy is there on paper but when will it be implemented is another question? And why is it not being implemented?

Alternatively, there is a growing awareness of women's rights and dignity; an awareness that our potential is not fully utilized. It is not just by attending in large numbers that the issue of our rights and dignity will be addressed. I am convinced that we People of God, the real Church, do not need the power that comes from our rulers. We have the power and promise of the Holy Spirit. What would Jesus say? Which side would he be on?"

Pauline Chakkalakal

The bio-data of Pauline Chakkalakal describes the width and intensity of her involvement in Church structures and ministries. In itself, it speaks of the integration of women in the Church of India. She belongs to the congregation of the Daughters of St. Paul (DSP) and is regular contributor to various periodicals on feminist issues. Pauline holds a doctorate in Biblical Theology. She teaches Pauline Letters and Theology, Biblical Women, Biblical Spirituality, Mariology, Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology, and is a prolific writer. Her doctoral thesis entails a sociological, biblical, theological and ecclesiological critique of the power relations in the church and society.²

Pauline Chakkalakal's scholarly analysis of Paul emphasises the egalitarian nature of the Church. She restated her conclusions on 11 April 2017 in an email: "Today when women have proven their effective leadership in many parts of the secular sphere, church authorities are admonished to initiate structural changes in the existing systems by encouraging women to participate in all ministries and at all levels of decision-making, Church's organisational structure and institutional power must undergo a process of conversion. Similarly, women should reclaim their rightful space in the church and allow feminine energies to reinvigorate its existence. This will eventually lead to the realization of Paul's liberative vision in Gal. 3:28 and empower the whole church to become a community of 'discipleship of equals.' Chakkalakal, 2007. Pauline believes that in our quest for feminist leadership, we need to

² Pauline Chakkalakal, *Discipleship - A Space for Women's Leadership? - A Feminist Theological Critique*, Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 2004, reprinted 2007.

strive constantly to transform the hierarchical pyramid into what Letty Russel calls "leadership in the round", in which decision-making flows around and across and not up and down the ladder of authority.

Marita Estor

Marita Estor of the Grail movement is of German origin. She has been President of the International Grail, and a member of the German Synod. She has held important posts in the government, especially in the Department of Labour and Social Affairs and the Department of Women's Affairs, (when the Minister was Angela Merkel with her first assignment in the unified German government).

Marita Estor presents her views on Catholic women in the Church in Germany. "As early as 1848, Catholic Laymen gathered for a General Assembly in which 400 associations raised their voices for the freedom in the Catholic Church and for social and ethical issues". From then on "Katholikentage" or "Day of Catholics" was organized regularly. Today it is held on a bi-annual basis, the last one being the 100th Katholikentag in Dresden in 2016. However, it is only since 1921 that Catholic women were allowed to participate in this event. At present there is equal participation and women's issues are major topics of concern.

1. Catholic Women's Organisations

There are two general Catholic Women's Organisation and most parishes have a member represented in them. The "Catholic Women of Germany", i.e. "Katholische Frauen Deutschlands" – (KFD), has 500,000 members. It is was formed in the 19th century with the parish priest then being its local head. Today, on the local, diocesan and national levels women elect their leaders and in most places women theologians have assumed this responsibility as "spiritual companions". They have political campaigns, adult education programs, such as two-year reflection process on charisms. The other organisation is the "Union of Catholic German Women" – "Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund" - (KDFB), which has about 200,000 members). This was founded by women themselves in 1903. It is more politically oriented and many of the women hold political offices on the local, state and national levels.

2. *Women Lay Theologians*

Already during World War II, (1939 – 1945), women were trained as catechists and parish helpers. Most candidates for the priesthood study theology at the Faculties of Catholic Theology at state universities. After the war, women could study theology at the universities. In 1953, the first woman was awarded a doctorate in catholic theology. While ordinations for the priesthood have declined from 557 per year in 1962 to 58 per year 2015, the number of Parish Workers is 3574, of which 974 men, the number of Pastoral Assistants is 1800, of which 1406 men. Teachers can study religious education also at the universities and teach religion in state schools. In the parishes mostly women and some men are trained to prepare children for Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. More and more lay women and men are involved in the liturgy as lectors and communion helpers and also leading the liturgy of burials.

3. *Women Religious*

Religious congregations have never played a big role in education or hospitals like in Holland or in the USA. In the last 20 years the number of women religious has declined by more than half to 16,600 in 2015. Most Catholic Hospitals were turned into Senior Residences or dissolved. The small number of Catholic High Schools run by Religious has also declined. The number of Contemplative Religious has declined by about 30% to 1223. Often women join contemplative orders after their retirement.

Church authorities have been challenged to promote women. As the largest employers in the service sector, the Catholic Caritas and the Protestant Diakonia employ more than a million people. In 2013 the Bishops Conference included a study day in their meeting about “Cooperation of Women and Men in the Church”. They realized that, “The Church cannot afford to do without the competencies and charisms of women.” In their final conclusions they decided to raise the number of women in leadership positions and to evaluate their progress in five years. They set objectives which the women’s organisations had been pleading for, for many years, e.g. positions in the bishops administration. A specific obstacle, namely, ordination as a prerequisite, had to be overcome.

Efforts are being made and they are bearing fruit. While in 2002 there was only one women Director of the Office of Pastoral Work in the Osnabrück Diocese, today 11 women hold this position, which means that in half of the 22 German Dioceses the responsibility for the Pastoral Work is in the hands of women. In recent years, a women was appointed Director of the Diocesan Academy of the Diocese of Stuttgart, an Adult Education Centre. Also two years ago a woman was appointed as Director of the German Centre of Bible Studies (Bibelwerk). In 2006 there were only 11% of the Professors of Theology women, now there are 20%. In all fields of theology – fundamental theology, philosophy, dogmatics, exegesis, church history, ecumenism, pastoral theology, liturgy and canon law – there are women lay professors teaching and doing research and they do this as women! And they are very much respected. In the institutes teaching religious education the percentage of women professors is even higher (29%).

In July 2017 for the first time a woman will be in charge as one of the three Directors of the Board of German Caritas. This list is not complete but shows that the Bishops Conference is taking their commitment seriously.

Conclusion

Not much has been done in Asia, in comparison to the inclusion of women in Church structures evident in several countries of the west. I am reminded of the closing recommendations of my presentation to the FABC International Theological Colloquium in Thailand in 1994, as they are still relevant today. These recommendations need to be reiterated again and implemented with urgency: “The pastors and leaders of the Church need to initiate and support efforts to resist injustice against women at the grass roots level and at all levels, supporting equal pay and just working conditions for women in society and in Church institutions, making Christian education and catechesis gender sensitive, promoting the participation of women at all levels of social leadership, studying the issues of women and health, women and ecology, women and ecclesiology, educate men and women to critique the ways in which the recent moves at re-colonisation of Asia at the economic, cultural and psycho-social level leads to dehumanization

of Asian life, especially of women's life. The FABC can encourage the training of Asian women in theology, scripture, liturgy, canon law, etc., promote qualified women theologians in theological faculties and women's leadership at the parish level, at national and international levels of Church functioning. It can create opportunities for Christian women to create new Asian theologies and models for the local Churches, promote inclusive language and concepts in liturgy, catechesis and Church documents, change paternalistic modes of operating with women in society and Church groups, ensure that women have access to being heads of parish and diocesan bodies and participate in decision-making in the Church".³

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³ Pearl Drego, "Women in Asia", *Papers of FABC Theological Colloquium*, Pataya, Thailand, 1994.

Hominisation and the Kingdom of God: Transformational Perspective Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx

Rajesh Kavalackal

The Church is at the service of the Kingdom of God. The Church's commitment to the Kingdom of God is to continue the mission of hominisation inaugurated by Jesus. The name 'Christian' was given to the spiritual movement of the first community of Jesus' followers by 'non-Christians' based on the life and inspiration they derived from Jesus. In their lives they showed the visible presence of Christ through their practice of love and charity. It is because of this mystery the Pastoral Constitution of the Church speaks of two dangers regarding the attitude of Christians. Firstly, Christians do not take up the task of building a better future for society seriously. Secondly, it warns of an unchristian-way in the arrogant assumption of a self-made future within the Kingdom of God arising from the placement of the human at the centre of worldly reality.

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Introduction

The career of Edward Schillebeeckx¹, an outstanding Dominican theologian from Belgium, has spanned most of the 20th century.

For many scholars, as the most compelling Dominican Theologian of our time, Edward Schillebeeckx's theological reflections are, first of all, formed by his day-today life as a Dominican friar and his mystical and political aspects of faith. They are in correspondence with the central themes of Dominican

Schillebeeckx's reflections on humanity are based on the analysis of the 'concrete contemporary Christian (human) experience'.² In addition, the European cultural context with its philosophical currents of the critical philosophy of enlightenment and the philosophical quest for meaning influenced his theologizing arriving at a human based foundation.³ All these helped him to place an emphasis on the "orthopraxis" over "orthodoxy."⁴ In this article an attempt is made to explain how he reflects on the relationship between the essence of the human being, i.e. the process to hominisation and the Kingdom of God. "The struggle for the *humanum* means that we anticipate our fullness."⁵ It is to be noted that he does not use the word hominisation and our attempt here is to assimilate and define *humanum* in terms of hominisation. His commitment to the cause of humaneness in all spheres is the pivotal point on which his theology hinges.⁶

1. The word "Hominisation"

We have the often quoted statement from St. Irenaeus that "the glory of God is man fully alive and the life of man is the vision of God"

spiritual life - contemplation, and action. Cf. J. Bowden, *Schillebeeckx in Search of the Kingdom of God* (New York: Cross Road, 1983), 25, 115; Cf. P. Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx* (Collegeville: Michael Glazier Books, 1999), 17; Cf. R. Schreiter, ed., *The Schillebeeckx Reader* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1986), 1.

² Cf. R. Schreiter, *The Schillebeeckx Reader* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1986), 10; Cf. W.J. Hill, "Human Happiness as God's Honour: Background to Theology in Transition," in R. Schreiter and M.C. Hilker, *The Praxis of Christian Experience* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 2; Cf. R. Schreiter, "Edward Schillebeeckx" in *A Handbook of Christian Theologians*, ed., D.G. Peerman and M.E. Marty (Nashville: Abigdon Press, 1984), 626.

³ Cf. P. Kennedy, *Deus Humanissimus*, 30.

⁴ Cf. W.J. Hill, "Human Happiness as God's Honour: Background to Theology in Transition," 8.

⁵ Cf. R. Schreiter, "Edward Schillebeeckx," in *The Modern Theologians*, ed. D.S. Ford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 152-155.

⁶ Cf. E. Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx*, 6.

(*Gloria enim Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio Dei*).”⁷ What is this fullness of human being? Where shall we encounter it? Accordingly, the perennial questions pertaining to the end of human life are whether life is destined towards communion with God as its end (divinization, *theosis*) which is very much spiritualistic in nature or towards neighbour and word humanisation which is very much secular in nature or, indeed, both, which are, in fact, integrally related.⁸ There is no difference between the profane and the secular but the transformation of history into a ‘New Heaven and New Earth’ is that what really matters.⁹

At the present scenario of the modern world where ‘death of God’ is a fashion, where amassing money at the expense of the others is way, where consumer becomes the king, where ‘the other’ becomes a hell (hatred is the widespread too now to subjugate others), what is at stake is the dignity and authenticity of human person. The imago Dei is disfigured in the modern man. There we need to revitalize our anthropology on the basis of our Christian categories. The word hominisation denotes exactly the same. Though the word was coined by Teilhard de Chardin and subsequently developed by Karl Rahner as far as human evolution is concerned, their motive was to merge heaven and earth together. Human evolves into a spiritual being. In the internal spiritual sphere we encounter the dignity and credibility of human life. In contrast to that the secular humanists adopts the word ‘humanization’ which does not comprehend an integral anthropology. In this article through the window of hominisation we try to comprehend that integral view of Edward Schillebeeckx.

⁷ Irenaeus, *Contre les Hérésies*, IV. 20, 7 in SC, 648.

⁸ Cf. J. Webster, K. Tanner and I. Torrance, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 298. Here onwards Cf. J. Webster, K. Tanner and I. Torrance, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*. Wolfhart Pannenberg has also discussed this aspect in detail in his work. For details see, Cf. W. Pannenburg, *The Theology of the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 51-71.

⁹ Cf. J. Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus Today* (New York: Orbis, 1995), 14-15. Here onwards J. Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God*.

2. Initial Publications

After the world war in 1945 he was attracted by existentialism. The questions for him in these days were the relationship between the earth and heaven or the relationship between the naturally human and Christian life. Human existence was at stake was the gist of his article "Christian situation."¹⁰ In 1945 he published his first article in *Tijdschriftvoor Geestelijk Leven* entitled "The Sense of Being a Creature as the Basis of our Spiritual Life."¹¹ The gist of the essay is that God is the sovereign creator and whatever the human being possesses are gifts from God. In later articles such as "The Christian Situation" he confronted secular humanists and pointed out the Christian profane task in the modern world.

The Christian doctrine of Original Sin says that human nature has turned away from God with much emphasis on evil. But for Schillebeeckx humankind is 'bent back on itself,' 'shut up in itself'. The relationship is cut off. Nature which is "a divine jewel" is not paralysed but has become "purposeless." Nothing intrinsically in the orientation towards God has occurred but the consequence of Original Sin is grasped when humankind developed a one-sided "view of life within the world."¹² In all of these articles one could see the development of an existential humanist in E. Schillebeeckx.

3. Edward Schillebeeckx's Basic Theological Assertions

Schillebeeckx's theology is often termed an anthropocentric theology because he gives more emphasis to the *concrete experiences of human beings*. For him the "theological task is the critical correlation between Christian tradition and contemporary experiences."¹³ Schillebeeckx proposed the following theological assertions that eventually arrive at

¹⁰ E. Borgman, *Schillebeeckx: A Theologian in History*, 71-73.

¹¹ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, "Schepesel-besefalsgrondslag van onsgeestelijkleven," *Tijdschriftvoor Geestelijk Leven*, 1 (1945) 15-43; P. Kennedy, *Deus Humanissimus*, 46.

¹² Cf. E. Borgman, *Schillebeeckx: A Theologian in History*, 90.

¹³ Cf. M.C. Hilker, "Hermeneutics of History in the Theology of E. Schillebeeckx," *The Thomist* 1 (January, 1987), 97.

the dignity of humankind. Based on this theology he builds his concept of human destiny and its relationship with the Kingdom of God. The following are the main theological aspects in his thinking.

3.1. The Mystery Aspect of God and the Insufficiency of Images - An Ontological View

In order to present the reality of God, Schillebeeckx always reflects on the fact of mystery. The theology of mystery leads us 'to the investigation of human experience which is endowed with a nature and divine character that the human intellect cannot comprehend. "By being God in absolute freedom, God thus reveals to us that all our images of God are in fact human products and projections which as such are incapable of describing the divine reality."¹⁴ In opposition to the atheistic view he says God is not a projection of human wishful thinking but rather a projection from God to humankind through historical mediation. "He is not himself a projection, but rather projects himself on to our conscious history, from which we produce images of God."¹⁵ The authentic images of God must direct us to the reality of God himself.¹⁶

For him humans themselves are objects of faith because God has out of his unlimited love made 'humankind's cause His cause.' It is in the concrete human experience that transcendence is mediated to us both in personal and social inter-subjective relationships. In an emphatic way he says, "At world exhibitions dedicated to the humanity of man one still finds a pavilion of God."¹⁷

3.2. Our Innate Urge to Know the Graciousness of God – A Metaphysical viewpoint

Schillebeeckx had a belief in the utter goodness and graciousness of God.¹⁸ He had that deep confidence in God. He observes,

¹⁴ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, 74.

¹⁵ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, 75.

¹⁶ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, 74-75.

¹⁷ E. Schillebeeckx, *God and Man*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald and Peter Tomlinson (New York: Seed and Ward, 1969), 5.

¹⁸ Cf. R. Schrieter, *The Schillebeeckx Reader*, 16.

Although man can reach God through creation, he cannot through his creaturely powers alone, establish any immediate personal contact with God... In our human way we reach God but not as a *person* in and for himself. But since we nonetheless affirm, although by way of creation, that God is a personal absolute in whom is found the reason for our existence...¹⁹

Schillebeeckx explains, "He is there not *because* we exist, although it is only through our own existence that we have come to realize his divine existence."²⁰ It is only by grace rather than by virtue of our own merits that we come into a person to person contact with God. "Personal communication with God is possible only in and through God's own generous initiative in coming to meet us in grace."²¹ In Schillebeeckx's own words a human being becomes a "living God."²² He gave much emphasis to the extent to which our salvation is already completed in consequence of God's gracious act in Christ and at the same time looks forward to its completion in the future. His memorable phrase is, "God is mindful of humanity."²³

4. The Thomistic Philosophical Influence

In order to understand Schillebeeckx's his concept of the human being it is necessary to rely upon his concept of God according to the

¹⁹ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God* (New York: Seed and Ward, 1963), 2; Schillebeeckx is of the opinion that human reason is not in a position to know God in Himself. God can be known by things. "Human beings are the podium of the knowledge of God." In fact he was against the traditional conceptual theological articulations. Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, trans. N.D. Smith, vol.1 (New York: Seed and Ward, 1967), 121; Cf. E Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx*, 374-375.

²⁰ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *God and Man*, 24.

²¹ E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the sacrament of Encounter with God*, 2.

²² E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the sacrament of Encounter with God*, 23; Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *God and Man*, 18.

²³ E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans. (New York, Hubert Hoskins, Crossroad, 1974), 607.

philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas.²⁴ That God can be known by human beings is central to Schillebeeckx's theological enterprise. He does not agree with the concept that belief in God can be either justified or explained on the basis of philosophical argument. Now the question is whether religious faith may be regarded as rational or not. While it is not a purely logical exercise he says, it is not without reason.²⁵ In his philosophical analysis he says that comprehensibility and transcendence are the key words that believers should be aware of and that therefore philosophical human concepts cannot explain adequately the presence of God. To Schillebeeckx the reality of humankind is a divine creation. People know God because they exist in God. So we have the knowledge about God just as cause is related to its effect. At this point he shares the view of Thomas Aquinas.²⁶ For Aquinas finite humankind can communicate with God because man participates in the divine essence. God subsists as a Being in a participatory way. There is some commonality that brings them in dialogue with each other.

Similarly, for Aquinas revelation consists of the objective (action of God in creation recorded in history and given to articles of faith) and the subjective (inner enlightenment of the mind). So faith means a spiritual union between the believer and God.²⁷ Transposing Aquinas idea of revelation as an encounter and dialogue between God and humanity Schillebeeckx views the dialogical character of revelation. He considers the double aspect of the relationship. First of all, the human comprised of body and spirit comes to the relationship through the medium of the material world. Secondly, the offer of an encounter should be mediated by concrete, visible human history for the human to respond to this offer. It is in and through the medium of creation that God communicates. In other words God reveals himself in consideration

²⁴ In fact, his philosophical thinking was against the contemporary philosophical discussions about God namely, 'evidentialism,' which says that God can either be proved or disproved on the basis of evidences given to the human rational subject. For detail, Cf. P. Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx*, 10-11.

²⁵ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, 64, 75.

²⁶ Cf. P. Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx*, 35. Cf. Kennedy, *Deus Humanssimus*, 122-126.

²⁷ *ST*, II-III, q. 4, a. 1.

of human experiences in limitedness or creatureliness.²⁸ In agreement with Aquinas, Schillebeeckx describes human being as the fundamental “symbol of God and the story of God” and “God is pure Positivity.”²⁹

5. The Concept of Humanity:

God and Human Inter-subjectivity

After having discussed Schillebeeckx’s philosophical background in view of his theologizing on the human being’s demonstration of a dignity and vitality, eliciting our term ‘hominisation,’ our focus here is on the concept of humanity proper.

5.1. In Relation to God

The complete concept of humanity is fulfilled only in God. More precisely, God’s very being encompasses humanity. As humans we are inclined to separate divine and human realities but for Schillebeeckx reality is inclusive. Instead of conceiving it as God against the universe, Schillebeeckx wanted to see reality as being intelligible only in the reality of God.³⁰ In other words Schillebeeckx sees that there is a correlation between the human image of God, humankind, and the world. In other words, humans can find God only in God’s inwardness (eschatological offering) in going outwards in human history. The revelation, which is a gratuitous gift from God to the human being, is to be experienced in the historical “horizontal” expression of God.³¹ For

²⁸ ST, 1a. q. 12 a. 7 and 8; Cf. M. C. Hilbert, “Hermeneutics of History: The Theological Method of Edward Schillebeeckx,” *The Thomist* 1 (January, 1987), 101.

²⁹ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in Our Western Cultures* (London: SCM, 1987), 62.

³⁰ In the face of modern secularism where God is almost dead Schillebeeckx wanted to present the existence of God in an intelligible way to the modern man. He is of the opinion that modern man finds meaning in life without God. Enlightenment moment contributed a lot for this. God is not necessary for the world. So we have to go beyond theism as well as atheism. But ultimately the complete definition for God is not possible and that is pertaining to God alone. See E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, 99-100. P. Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx*, 6.

³¹ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *God and Man*, 190.

Schillebeeckx revelation is not only through the inward “vertical” expressions as God reveals himself in our freedom but also outward as well, through our human world and through our human relationships.

5.1.1. *Knowledge about God and Human Liberation*

For Schillebeeckx that God can be known by people in the presence of modern secularism. He commented that in comparison with olden days, the word “God” is more familiar with people now. Whatever may be the circumstances in which we live, either in determinism or in blind faith, there is no situation in which God cannot come to us.³² As we have seen already Schillebeeckx has maintained that the human being encounters God in and through other people, co-operating each other in an engagement to humanize the world.³³ He writes; “The most obvious, modern way to God is that of welcoming fellow human beings, both interpersonally and by changing structures which enslaves them” and “here ethical praxis becomes an essential component of the true knowledge of God.”³⁴ According to him believers must see God in human liberation and human salvation. In salvation history is an event where the liberation of humankind happens. Because “the honour of God consists in human happiness, and humanity finds its happiness in God.”³⁵ For Schillebeeckx faith in God is not possible without faith in humankind. Schillebeeckx describes in his memorable phrase *extra mundum nullas alius est*, that there is no salvation outside the world.³⁶ Our history and our natural environment are involved in the sphere of God’s saving activity. The role of every religion is to make believers aware of the salvation brought by God in history.³⁷

³² E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, 11.

³³ Here Schillebeeckx mentions about the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas about the incarnational presence of the other person in one’s life. See, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 57.

³⁴ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 63.

³⁵ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, “I Believe in Jesus of Nazareth: The Christ, The Son of God, The Lord,” trans. G. Sloyan, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1 (Winter, 1980), 22.

³⁶ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Church the Human Story of God*, 12.

³⁷ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, 12.

5.1.2. *Salvation and "Jesus the Eschatological Prophet"*

The Apocalyptic eschatology maintains the radical discontinuity between this world and the world to come. Schillebeeckx rejects this dichotomy. He rejects any dualistic vision regarding the vision of human history.³⁸ The concept of redemption is basically a call for *metanoia* or conversion. But he conceives that this call becomes an ideology if it is limited to the sphere of an inner conversion without certain conditions under which this call can be realized since human being is a social being. Evidently the language of faith about redemption has close relationship with human commitment to human emancipation from all kinds of alienation.³⁹ "This emancipation motivated by genuine care for our fellow humans and carried out, for example, by those who are active in the spheres of mental and spiritual welfare and social or political work can be seen as a sign and an *arrha* of salvation although they are not identical."⁴⁰ Schillebeeckx mentions that actual historical movements of socio-political liberation provide the basis for communicating meaningfully God's saving activity in spite of the current contexts of oppression and humiliation. The correlation between God's initiative of salvation and the liberative praxis is the main aspect of Schillebeeckx's practical soteriology:⁴¹ For him dignifying events in socio-political liberation are considered as the main components of God's self activity.

³⁸ Cf. B. E. Hinze, "A Prophetic Vision: Eschatology and Ethics," in *The Praxis of Christian Experience: An Introduction to the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx*, ed., R. Schreiter and M.C. Hilert (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 135

³⁹ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, "The Crisis in the Language of Faith as a Hermeneutical Problem," trans. D. Smith, *Concilium* 9 (May, 1973), 41.

⁴⁰ E. Schillebeeckx, "The Crisis in the Language of Faith as a Hermeneutical Problem," 41.

⁴¹ Cf. J.D. Simon, "Salvation and liberation in the Practical- Critical Soteriology of Schillebeeckx," *Theological Studies* 63 (2002), 494. He sees three types of salvation namely, horizontal, vertical and religious and political. He gives much waitage to the third one and says that here both religious and political are complementary and they interpret the religious and humanizing aspect of redemption. See E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 907.

This is the basis for his concept that Jesus is the Eschatological Prophet. In his life, death and resurrection we witness God's salvific initiative for humankind. Jesus is empowered by God and his praxis in life exceptionally describes God's reign of love as a reign of justice and reconciliation between human beings. This means that in Jesus God expresses his solidarity with the suffering people, "God's own merciful identification with vulnerable men."⁴² The identification of Jesus with vulnerable suffering people is a reflection of the reign of God. So we can say that "Jesus is the Eschatological prophet of God's preferential solidarity."⁴³ Renewal is the elimination of suffering in the form of sickness, injustice and oppression. For Schillebeeckx it includes the restoration of life for the dead and dying.⁴⁴ In Jesus the reign of God made it possible urging human beings to develop a loving relationship with the *living God* who has sovereign power over all the violence of evil.

5.2. In Relation to Human Beings

Schillebeeckx then proceeds to an anthropological understanding of human inter-subjectivity. Humankind is an incarnated being in his bodiliness. Spirit is present in the world in self-communication to bodiliness and therefore it is humanized and subjectivized. What Schillebeeckx wants to say is that the human body belongs to human subjectivity. The human 'I' exists in the world but he finds his inwardness only when he is engaged with other fellow beings. One is present to himself only when one is present to someone else. Being in the world implies the spirit in corporeality, always conscious of the presence of the other being with an orientation towards other fellow beings. Therefore, the human finds himself or herself only in the humanized world. Therefore human bodiliness is important since it is the visible revelation of human inwardness.⁴⁵ Moreover, it is the point of reference for all personal human action in history.

⁴²Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 18

⁴³J.D. Simon, "Salvation and liberation in the Practical- Critical Soteriology of Schillebeeckx," *Theological Studies*, 63, 2002, 500.

⁴⁴ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story God*, 112.

⁴⁵Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *God and Man*, 187. However, Schillebeeckx is of the

5.2.1. *Human Destiny in Relation to the "Anthropological Constants"*

According to Schillebeeckx there is no pre-existing definition of humanity. Since his theological pursuits begin on the platform of the 'concrete existential situation of human being,' he is of the opinion that many a time the doctrine of salvation is being proclaimed ignoring the people with whom the doctrine is concerned. He goes to the extent of saying that more than the already given 'the nature' in human being, the criteria for a true and a joyful humanity is ethical action which in turn furthers true humanity. These constants involve the area of human values, orientations, permanent human impulses.⁴⁶ These "Anthropological constants"⁴⁷ or certain constitutive of their aspects, according to Schillebeeckx would help us to understand human dignity and human salvation based on human identity in social culture. In one way or other we can say that these constants are concerned with human destiny characterized by the 'already' and the 'not yet'. These are seen in terms of the identity of the human being in social culture.

opinion that there is no chronology in action namely, an act of mind is carried out first in inwardness and afterwards expressed outwardly. Instead, in the very turning towards the fellow being and the world the inwardness determines itself. See E. Schillebeeckx, *God and Man*, 188-192.

⁴⁶ Cf. R. Schreiter, *The Schillebeeckx Reader*, 28. Schillebeeckx says this not because he disvalues the God-given nature in man but the emphasis is given to human being at disposal of all other qualities. The traditional Thomist axiom is that 'grace presupposes nature'. This supernatural grace is not imposed on nature ignoring the capabilities of its own. Let us say, the human being stands in front of God as a personal absolute in concrete natural existence. This is the basis for the historical situation of the human being among other fellow beings. This is the basis for the phenomenological understanding of Schillebeeckx. See, J.W. Hill, "Human Happiness as God's Honour: Background to Theology in Transition", in *The Praxis of Christian experience: An Introduction to the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx*, eds. R. Schreiter and M.C. Hilert (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 12-13.

⁴⁷ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 734-743.

5.2.2. *Human Worthiness in Relation to Corporeality, Nature and Environment*

Schillebeeckx sees the co-relationship between the so called profane and spiritual namely, this worldly and other worldly. We do know that he was the greatest proponent of non-dualism in this matter. The oft-quoted concept that the human being *is* a body and he *has* one (being and having) clearly shows that corporeality is an indispensable factor in human life. This enables humans to come into contact with the wide spectrum of life namely, nature and the cosmos. Since all these are constitutive of humanity, human salvation involves all these dimensions. If we want to survive we have to give respect to these factors. Empirical science cannot establish the limits of immutability, conditioning and the capability of humanity with exactness. This cognitive nature is beyond the capacity of science but we see the empirical sciences are in getting all human needs namely, the elementary needs of man like hunger, sex etc. We cannot tackle the corporeality of these at will without the awareness that there is definitely an attack on our goodness, happiness and on our true humanity.⁴⁸ This constantly calls for an understanding that our corporeality and our natural environment are essential in discovering our true and genuine humanity. The relationship between the human and nature is not on the basis of dominion but on the basis of values of an aesthetic and enjoyable conversation with nature.⁴⁹ Therefore, Christian salvation incorporates everything, specifically human corporeality, nature and environment.⁵⁰ To say that all this is alien to the meaning of 'Christian salvation' is perhaps to dream of a salvation for angels, but not for men."⁵¹

5.2.3. *Human Worthiness in Respect of Fellow Human Beings*

Human worthiness demands a relationship with fellow human beings. The definition of personality includes sharing ourselves with others as confirmation of our personhood and existence by fellow human beings.

⁴⁸ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 743-745.

⁴⁹ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 734-735;

⁵⁰ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 736.

⁵¹ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 736.

In this perspective only a disabled human being conceives his/her role in society since his or her existence is also confirmed and authorized by society in the web of relationships.⁵² Personal identity is not possible unless and until the human being allows the fellow being to be one with himself/herself in spite of all kinds of limitations. In the face of human limitedness, one person is related to another so much so that the *human is destined for others, directed towards others* and not for him/herself alone.⁵³ Therefore, the duty and task for humankind would be the attitude of accepting his fellow being with respect to freedom and otherness of others (personhood, individuality and limitedness). This is done in the realm of inter-subjectivity. Schillebeeckx here follows the idea of Levinas for showing that the presence of society in all interpersonal relationships is more than a personal level of meeting.

6. Hominisation and Contrast Experiences

Following our discussion on basic constants, we proceed to Schillebeeckx's reflection on the concrete historical experience of humankind which he likes to call 'the contrast experience' or negative experiences, namely, suffering. Even though he sees the mysterious nature of suffering, he calls for action from the human being to alleviate suffering in order to humanize the world. For him salvation cannot be found outside of suffering.⁵⁴

Schillebeeckx sees positive aspects in the human experience of suffering believing that it matures humankind into a better *humanum*. Suffering transforms us and others when we suffer for something good and righteous. There is a call for transformation of the actual situation and demands personal responsibility for the choice of a good and true cause. We have to deny evil the right to exist. In day to day practice people should expose the causes of good and evil and evil should not be treated at the same level. We may not be able to explain the cause of suffering but a reminder of evil in history prompts us to apply practical solutions which are liberating and active. Humanization calls for this practical action.

⁵² Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 737.

⁵³ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 737.

⁵⁴ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 769.

7. The Quest for Hominisation (*Humanum*)

There are many meaningless things experienced by human beings in their own life in society, even the Church makes it impossible for them to cope with their own destiny, with their fellow beings and with society at large. They have to be reconciled with the entire reality to achieve meaningfulness in life. The human being longs for a wholeness where the whole meaning of reality is experienced and realized. This situation can be called "salvation", being whole where there is no threat to *humanum*.⁵⁵ The eschatological peace, *shalom* urges us to be reconciled with realities and to promote the establishment of peace here and now in our history. Schillebeeckx sees salvation as essentially love. It is not mere human inwardness but includes the corporeal reality with its social elements. But we know that the corporeal reality does not constitute salvation in its fullness but is only a partial reality of the experience of salvation in love in situations of poverty and slavery.⁵⁶ The entire question of meaningfulness is successfully answered by the human being in action, *praxis*. Schillebeeckx sees the essential relationship between earthly history and salvation history. In history the human encounters his salvation as his 'future determination'.⁵⁷ Schillebeeckx takes human history seriously. History gets its importance in the light of the future. Schillebeeckx is critical of the traditional understanding of the future of history which was considered as purely a matter beyond this earthly life. So for Schillebeeckx, the "Future" is an existential condition for the human being. According to Schillebeeckx, Moltmann has failed to fully understand it.⁵⁸

8. Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God

For Schillebeeckx, Jesus' life and message are intended by God for the future which rests in the potentiality of God. The last judgment is a

⁵⁵ E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 746.

⁵⁶ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 746.

⁵⁷ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 748

⁵⁸ E. Schillebeeckx, "Interpretation of Eschatology," in *Dogma: The Problem of Eschatology*, Eds. E. Schillebeeckx and Boniface Willems (New York, Paulist Press, 1969), 50.

part of his message but we have to go beyond that. The *evangelion* of Jesus (Good News) is "God's kingly rule is at hand". It was central to his message that it is imminent. He says:

In other words "expectation of the end" here is an expectation of the approaching rule of God. And for Jesus this means the proximity of God's unconditional will to salvation, of reconciling clemency and sufficing graciousness and along with them opposition to all forms of evil: suffering and sin.⁵⁹

Jesus' message had its foundation on the will of the Sovereign God. "Jesus is about God's business; and the business of man, the *humanum*, is to search after God" and "we are each other's happiness."⁶⁰ God is a God of people in so far as He cares for them. Jesus proclaimed a God who is related to human being and vice versa. Moreover, it also leads to an orthopraxis, a moral conduct on the part of the human being for the growth of that Kingdom of God. Schillebeeckx's memorable phrase is "God's concern as human concern."⁶¹

8.1. The Parables of Jesus: An Indication of the Coming Kingdom of God

Schillebeeckx adds that only parables explain parables. They all speak about the here and now aspects and they challenge us. The content of the parables are about our own lives, our own actions and our own world. They challenge us to go against the conventional belief system and behaviour. They prompt us to change and renew society.⁶²

In most of the parables Jesus put forward a choice to be made for or against the possibility of a new way of life. Consequently, it becomes a selection for or against Jesus. Jesus becomes the centre of the parable. Two ways of living are there to choose. One is challenged to accept "the new logic of grace and having compassion." By our short-time action we have to change the course of human suffering and thereby

⁵⁹ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 140.

⁶⁰ E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 142.

⁶¹ E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 143.

⁶² Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 157.

our history. The time factor in the parables means not the *a-temporal* or *supra temporal*. Instead, it speaks of the present, here and now. The parables speak about our life, our existence and our actions. ⁶³Thus every parable of Jesus should be viewed in the light of the general message of the Kingdom of God.

8.2. *The Kingdom of God and the Abba Experience*

It is the God or *abba* experience⁶⁴ that was the basis of Jesus' religious life and that makes him more than a secular human. Jesus addressed God as *abba* in a familiar and surprising way and consequently for some it was an offense that was regarded as contravening the tenets of Judaism.⁶⁵ Expressing the special experience Jesus wanted to show us the particular nature of his message, praxis and conduct. In his praxis of the Kingdom namely, in his dealing with sinners, in his table fellowship, in his attitude to law, in his healing and miracles etc. he, in fact, offered the salvation of God. The heart and foundation appears as God bent on humanity.

At this juncture it is important to note Schillebeeckx's understanding of human fulfillment in Christ. In Christ we have the divine promise, affirmed and assured. Jesus' praxis of "going around doing good," liberating people from the clutches of suffering and satanic powers and calling for reconciliation are the symbols of the arrival of definitive salvation on earth.⁶⁶ In Jesus, God reveals himself who wills the salvation of all humankind. As a culmination of the theological discussion on Jesus Schillebeeckx's says that the emphases behind his two books on 'Jesus' are that "salvation for mankind lies in the living God (*via hominis, visio Dei*) and God's honour lies in our happiness and liberation, salvation and wholeness" (*Gloria Dei, vivens homo*).⁶⁷

⁶³ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 158.

⁶⁴ E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 256-269.

⁶⁵ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 266.

⁶⁶ E. Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 122-24.

⁶⁷ E. Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 142.

9. 'The Already' and 'Not yet' Aspect of the Kingdom of God

From the above points we can conclude that both Jesus and the people who met him had experienced the Kingdom of God here and now on earth. The Kingdom of God is not completely an unworldly or other-worldly one but a completion of this world. Therefore, the followers of Jesus were able to encounter fragmentary experiences of the Kingdom of God on earth. But the complete *humanum* is indefinable since it is eschatological in nature where we seek the eschatological fullness of freed human beings expressed in terms of metaphors and parables according to Schillebeeckx. He speaks of four metaphors in connection with the Kingdom of God.⁶⁸

1. The total salvation or fullness of *humanum* is for building a society where there is no master-servant relationship, where there is no pain or tears and where God will be all in all; (I Cor 15: 28) that is the germ of the Kingdom of God.
2. It is where the tradition of the Church regarding faith in the resurrection of the body is comprehended. In salvation the happiness of the individual including *sarx*, body and flesh, is accomplished. It also speaks of the importance of corporeality on earth.
3. The biblical metaphor of 'the new earth and new heaven' calls for an intact ecological environment which we want on earth as the consummation of eschatology. This is not of the other world.
4. In the normative role of Jesus we find the fragmentary experience of the Kingdom of God and it is in him that we find the consummation of this eschatological Kingdom. This expectation is the proclamation behind the biblical image of '*Maranatha*' (come Lord Jesus). This eschatological experience that is indefinable in human language is nurtured and experienced in the faith conviction of the uniqueness of Christ.

⁶⁸ E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, 133-34.

10. Christianity and Praxis of the Kingdom in the Building up of the World

Schillebeeckx sees this idea of building up the Kingdom of God as the ministry of the Church in the Pastoral Constitution of the Church (GS). The name 'Christian' was given to the spiritual movement of the first community of Jesus' followers by 'non-Christians' based on the life and inspiration they derived from Jesus. In their lives they showed the visible presence of Christ through their practice of love and charity. It is because of this mystery The Pastoral Constitution of the Church speaks of two dangers regarding the attitude of Christians. Firstly, Christians do not take the task of building a better future in society seriously. Secondly, it warns of an unchristian-way in the arrogant assumption of a self-made future within the Kingdom of God arising from the placement of the human at the centre of worldly reality. Therefore, according to Schillebeeckx the internal relationship between the Earth and future eschatological expectation, nevertheless leaves room for two types of Christianity: a type above all gives testimony of the eschatological future, the other will prepare as it were the subject of the final kingdom, striving for a better earthly future."⁶⁹ So the council teaches that we have to include all human activity for the building up of the world in the Easter mystery.⁷⁰

Any answer to the relativisation of the human's commitment to the building up of this world cannot be a flight from this world. The Christian commitment to this world should be on the basis of the hope of eschatological completion. Here humans will assume the central figure and will give themselves to this world. So every positive result achieved would appear to be conceived as the process of hominisation and at the same time hominisation itself is not the end that the world hoped for. From these reflections we understand that Christianity does not believe in an already established society but one in a state of constant

⁶⁹ E. Schillebeeckx, *Zending van demkerk* (Bilthoven: H. Nelissen, 1968), 56; Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church* (Indiana University: Sheed & Ward, 1973), 83.

⁷⁰ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church*, 84. *Gaudium et Spes*, 38.

growth. The consummation of the future is always open in Christianity and calls for an active commitment to a better future. According to Schillebeeckx Christians are committed to this world precisely because they hope for an eschatological completion where they would give themselves for the world.⁷¹ "Christians should not flee from this world but flee with the world towards future."⁷²

Conclusion

The Christian concept of human destiny or salvation teaches that it should be an integral involving of all existential spheres of human life. It has to deal with 'this worldly' as well as 'other worldly' aspects of life. This integral vision calls for the material and spiritual, present and eschatological, individual and communitarian wellbeing of humans. Salvation can be described positively and negatively. Positively it is the attainment of perfection or fulfillment. Negatively it is the liberation from all evil powers and disorders.⁷³

Edward Schillebeeckx emphasizes this integral vision of human destiny in terms of the relationship between *humanum* (the hominization process in our discussion) and the Kingdom of God. He visualizes *humanum* as a way or goal of the Kingdom of God. For Schillebeeckx, God's rule is not only found outside of this world as expressed in his oft-quoted phrase *extramundum nullas alus est*. Human beings cannot escape from history and they live in the past, present, and with the possibility of a future. The full realization of *humanum* is their future. Thus salvation becomes the theological language of that expectation or hope.

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⁷¹ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx *The Mission of the Church*, 85.

⁷² Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *The Mission in the Church*, 89.

⁷³ S. Athappilly, *Jesus Christ the Saviour* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications 2013), 44.